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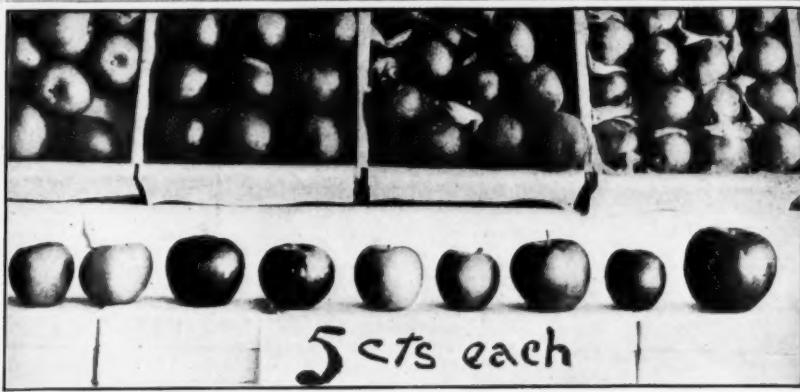


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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXXI. No. I

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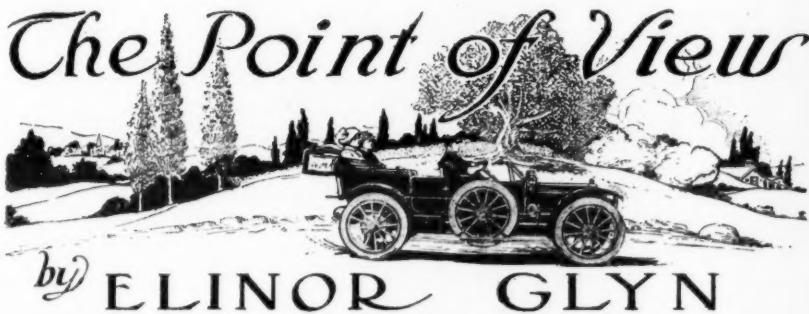
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXI.

FEBRUARY, 1913.

No. 1.



by ELINOR GLYN

CHAPTER I.

THE restaurant of the Grand Hotel, in Rome, was filling up. People were dining rather late—it was the end of May, and the entertainments were lessening—so they could dawdle over their repasts and smoke their cigarettes in peace.

Stella Rawson came in with her aunt and uncle, Canon and the Honorable Mrs. Ebley, and they took their seats in a secluded corner. They looked a little out of place—and felt it—amid this more or less gay company. But the drains of the Grand Hotel were known to be beyond question, and, coming to Rome so late in the season, the Reverend Canon Ebley felt it was wiser to risk the contamination of the over-worldly minded than a possible attack of typhoid fever. The belief in a divine protection did not give him or his lady wife that serenity it might have done, and they traveled fearfully, taking with them their own jaeger sheets, among other precautions.

They realized they must put up with the restaurant for meals, but at least the womenfolk should not pander to

the customs of the place and wear evening dress. Their subdued black gowns were fastened to the throat. Stella Rawson felt absolutely excited—she was twenty-one years old, but this was the first time she had ever dined in a fashionable restaurant, and it almost seemed like something deliciously wrong.

Life in the cathedral close, where they lived in England, was not highly exhilarating, and when its duties were over it contained only mild gossip and endless tea parties and garden parties by way of recreation.

Canon and the Honorable Mrs. Ebley were fairly rich people. The Uncle Erasmus' call to the church had been answered from inclination—not necessity. His heart was in his work. He was a good man, and did his duty according to the width of the lights in which he had been brought up.

Mrs. Ebley did more than her duty, and had often too much momentum, which now and then upset other people's apple carts.

She had, in fact, been the moving spirit in the bringing about of her Niece Stella's engagement to the bishop's junior chaplain, a young gentle-

man of aesthetic aspirations and eight hundred a year of his own.

Stella herself had never been enthusiastic about the affair. As a man, Eustace Medlicott said absolutely nothing at all to her—though, to be sure, she was quite unaware that he was inadequate in this respect. No man had meant anything different up to this period of her life. She had seen so few of them she was no judge.

Eustace Medlicott had higher collars than the other curates, and intoned in a wonderfully melodious voice in the cathedral. And quite a number of the young ladies of Exminster, including the bishop's second daughter, had been setting their caps at him from the moment of his arrival; so that when, by the maneuvers of Aunt Caroline Ebley, Stella found him proposing to her, she somehow allowed herself to murmur some sort of consent.

Then it seemed quite stimulating to have a ring, and to be congratulated upon being engaged. And the few weeks that followed while the thing was fresh and new had passed quite pleasantly. It was only when about a month had gone by that a gradual and growing weariness seemed to be falling upon her.

To be the wife of an ascetic high-church curate, who fasted severely during Lent, and had rigid views upon most subjects, began to grow into a picture which held out less and less charm for her.

But Aunt Caroline was firm—and the habit of twenty-one years of obedience held.

Perhaps fate was looking on in sympathy with her unrest. In any case, it appeared like the jade's hand, and not chance, which made Uncle Erasmus decide to take his holiday early in the year and decide to spend it abroad—not in Scotland or Wales, as was his custom.

Stella, he said, should see the Eternal City and Florence before settling down in the autumn to her new existence.

Miss Rawson actually jumped with joy—and the knowledge that Eustace Medlicott would be unable to accom-

pany them, but might join them later on, did not damp her enthusiasm.

Every bit of the journey was a pleasure from the moment they landed on French soil. They had come straight through to Rome from Paris, where they had spent a week at a small hotel; because of the lateness of the year, they must get to their most southern point first of all, and return northward in a more leisurely manner.

And now any one who is reading this story can picture this respectable English family, and understand their status and antecedents, so we can very well get back to them seated in the agreeable restaurant of the Grand Hotel, at Rome, beginning to partake of a modest dinner.

Mrs. Ebley—I had almost written the Reverend Mrs. Ebley—was secretly enjoying herself. She had that feeling that she was in a place where she ought not to be—through no fault of her own—and so was free to make the most of it; and certainly these well-dressed people were very interesting to glance at between mouthfuls of a particularly well-cooked fish.

Stella was thrilling all over, and her soft brown eyes were sparkling, and her dazzlingly pink-and-white complexion glowing with health and excitement; so that even in the Exminster confection of black grenadine she was an agreeable morsel for the male eye to dwell upon.

There were the usual company there—the younger diplomats from the embassies; a sprinkling of trim Italian officers in their pretty uniforms; French and Austrian ladies, as well as the attractive-looking native and American representatives of the élite of Roman smart society.

The tables began to fill up before the Ebleys had finished their fish, and numbers of the parties seemed to know one another, and nod and exchange words *en passant*.

But there was one table laid for a single person which remained empty until the entrées were being handed; and Stella, with her fresh interest in

the whole scene, wondered for whom it was reserved.

He came in presently—and he really merits a descriptive paragraph all to himself.

He was a very tall man, and well made, with broad shoulders and a small head. His evening clothes, though beautifully pressed, with that look which only a thoroughly good valet knows how to stamp upon his master's habiliments as a daily occurrence, were of a foreign cut and hang, and his shirt, unstarched, was of the finest pleated cambric.

These trifles, however, were not what rendered him remarkable, but that his light-brown hair was worn parted in the middle and waved back *à la vierge*, with a rather saintly expression, and was apparently just cut off in a straight line at the back. This was quite peculiar looking enough—and in conjunction with a young, silky beard, trimmed into a sharp point, with the look of an archaic Greek statue, he presented a type not easily forgotten. The features were regular, and his eyes were singularly calm and wise and blue.

It seemed incredible that such an almost grotesque arrangement of coiffure should adorn the head of a man in modern evening dress. It should have been on some Byzantine saint. However, there he was, and entirely unconcerned at the effect he was producing.

The waiters, who probably knew his name and station, precipitated themselves forward to serve him, and, with leisurely mien, he ordered a recherché dinner and a pint of champagne.

Stella Rawson was much interested, and so were her uncle and aunt.

"What a very strange-looking person!" Mrs. Ebley said. "Of what nation can he be, Erasmus? Have you observed him?"

Canon Ebley put on his pince-nez, and gave the newcomer the benefit of a keen scrutiny.

"I could not say with certainty, my dear. A northerner evidently, but whether Swedish or Danish it would be difficult to determine," he announced.

"He does not appear to know he is funny looking," Stella Rawson said timidly. "Do you notice, Aunt Caroline, he does not look about him at all? He has never glanced in any direction; it is as if he were alone in the room."

"A very proper behavior," the Aunt Caroline replied severely; "but he cannot be an Englishman. No Englishman would enter a public place having made himself remarkable like that, and then be able to sit there unaware of it. I am glad to say our young men have some sense of convention. You cannot imagine Eustace Medlicott perfectly indifferent to the remarks he would provoke if he were tricked out so."

Stella felt a sudden sympathy for the foreigner. She had heard so ceaselessly of her fiance's perfections!

"Perhaps they wear the hair like that in his country," she returned, with as much spirit as she dared to show. "And he may think we all look as funny as we think he does. Only he seems to be much better mannered than we are, because he is quite sure of himself, and quite unconscious or indifferent about our opinion."

Both her aunt and uncle looked at her with slightly shocked surprise, and she saw it at once, and reddened a little.

But this incident caused the remarkable-looking foreigner to crystallize in interest for her, especially when, in raising his glass of champagne, she saw that on his wrist there was a bracelet of platinum, with a small watch set with very fine diamonds. She could hardly have been more surprised if he had worn a ring in his nose, so unaccustomed was she to any type but that of the curates and young gentlemen of Exminster.

Canon and Mrs. Ebley finished their dinner in disdainful silence, and sailed from the room with chilling glances; but as Stella Rawson followed them demurely she raised her soft eyes when she came to the object of her relatives' contempt, and met his serene blue ones—and for some reason thrilled wildly.

There was a remarkable and powerful magnetism in his glance; it was

as if a breath of some other world touched her; she seemed to see into possibilities she had never dreamed about. She resented being drawn into a far corner on the right hand of the hall, and there handed an English paper to read for half an hour before being told to go to bed. She was perfectly conscious that she was longing for the stranger to come out of the restaurant that she might see him again.

But it was not until she was obediently following her aunt's black broché train to the lift up the steps again that the tall man passed them in the corridor. He never even glanced in their direction, and went on as though the space were untenanted; but had hardly got beyond when he turned suddenly and walked rapidly to the lift door, passing them again. So that the four entered it presently, and were taken up together.

Stella Rawson was very close to the remarkable-looking creature. And again a wild, nameless attraction crept over her. She noticed his skin was faintly browned with the sun, but was otherwise as fine as a child's—finer than most children's. And now she could see that three most wonderful pearls were his shirt studs.

He got out on the second floor—one beneath them—and said "Pardon" as he passed, but not as a French word, nor yet as if it were English.

During these few seconds Stella was quite aware that he had never apparently looked at her.

"I call such an appearance sacrilegious," Mrs. Ebley said. "A man has no right to imitate one of the blessed apostles in these modern days; it is very bad taste."

CHAPTER II.

Stella Rawson woke the next day with some sense of rebellion. There came with the rest of her post a letter from her betrothed. And although it was just such a letter as any nice girl engaged of her own free will to the bishop's junior chaplain ought to have been glad to receive, Stella found her-

self pouting and criticizing every sentence.

"I do wish Eustace would not talk such cant," she said to herself. "Even in this he is unable to be natural, and I am sure I shall not feel a thing like he describes when I stand in St. Peter's. I believe I would rather go into the Pantheon. I seem to be tired of everything I ought to like to-day." And still rebellious, she got up and was taken by her uncle and aunt to the Vatican, and was allowed to linger only in the parts which interested them.

"I never have had a taste for sculpture," Mrs. Ebley said. "People may call it by what names they please, but I consider it immoral and indecent."

"A wonder to me," the Uncle Erasmus joined in, "that a prelate—even a prelate of Rome—should have countenanced the housing of all these unclothed marbles in his own private palace."

Stella Rawson stopped for a second in front of an archaic Apollo of no great merit—because it reminded her of the unknown; and she wished with all her might something new and swift might come into her humdrum life.

After luncheon, for which they returned to the hotel, she wearily went over to the writing table in the corner of the hall to answer her lover's chaste effusion, and saw that the low armchair beside the escritoire was tenanted by a pair of long legs with singularly fine silk socks showing upon singularly fine ankles—while a pair of strong, slender hands held a newspaper in front of the rest of the body, concealing it all and the face. It was the English *Times*, which, as everybody knows, could hide Gargantua himself.

She began her letter, and not a rustle disturbed her peace.

"Dearest Eustace," she had written, "we have arrived in Rome—" And then she stopped, and fixed her eyes blankly upon the column of births, marriages, and deaths. She was staring at it with sightless eyes when the paper was slowly lowered, and over its top the blue orbs of the stranger looked back into hers.

Her pretty color became the hue of a bright-pink rose.

"Mademoiselle," a very deep voice said, in English, "is not this a world full of bores and tiresome duties? Have you the courage to defy them all for a few minutes—and talk to me instead?"

"Monsieur!" Miss Rawson burst out, and half rose from her seat. Then she sat down again; the unknown had not stirred a muscle.

"Good!" he murmured. "One has to be courageous to do what is unconventional even if it is not wrong. I am not desirous of hurting or insulting you; I felt we might have something to say to one another. Is it so—tell me, am I right?"

"I do not know," whispered Stella lamely. She was so taken aback at the preposterous fact that a stranger should have addressed her at all, even in a manner of indifference and respect, that she knew not what to do.

"I observed you last night," he went on. "I am accustomed to judge of character rapidly; it is a habit I have acquired during my travels in foreign lands, when I cannot use the standard of my own. You are weary of a number of things, and you do not know anything at all about life, and you are hedged round with those who will see that you never learn its meaning. Tell me—what do you think of Rome? It contains things and aspects which afford food for reflection—is it not so?"

"We have only been to the Vatican as yet," Stella answered timidly. She was still much perturbed at the whole incident, but now that she had begun she determined she might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and she was conscious that there was a strong attraction in the mild blue eyes of the stranger. His manner had a complete repose and absence of self-consciousness which usually is only to be found in the people of race—in any nation.

"You were taken to the Sistine Chapel, of course," he went on, "and to the loggia and Bramante's staircase. You saw some statues, too, perhaps?"

"My uncle and aunt do not care

much for sculpture," Miss Rawson said, now regaining her composure, "but I like it—even better than pictures."

The stranger kept his steady eyes fixed upon her face all the time.

"I have a nymph in my house at home," he returned. "She came originally from Rome; she is not Greek, and she is very like you—the same droop of head; I remarked it immediately. I am superstitious—I suppose you would call what I mean by that word—and I knew directly that some day you, too, would mean things for me. That is why I spoke. Do you feel it, too?"

Stella Rawson quivered. The incredible situation suddenly paralyzed her. She—the Aunt Caroline's niece—and engaged to Eustace Medlicott, the bishop's junior chaplain—to be listening to a grotesque-looking foreigner making subtle speeches of an insinuating character, and, far from feeling scandalized and repulsed, to be conscious that she was thrilled and interested—it was hardly to be believed!

"Will you tell me from where you come?" she asked, with sweet bashfulness, raising two eyes as soft as brown velvet. "You speak English so very well—one cannot guess."

"I am a Russian," he said simply. "I come from near Moscow, and my name is Sasha Roumovski—Count Roumovski. Yours, I am aware, is Rawson, but I would like to know how you are called—Mary, perhaps? That is English."

"No, my name is not Mary," she answered, and froze a little; but the Russian's eyes continued to gaze at her with the same mild frankness, which disarmed any resentment. She felt they were as calm as deep pools of blue water; they filled her with a sense of confidence and security which she could not account for in any way.

Her color deepened; something in his peaceful expectancy seemed to compel her to answer his late question.

"My Christian name is Stella," she returned rather quickly; then added nervously: "I am engaged to Mr. Eus-

tace Medlicott, an English clergyman; we are going to be married in September next."

"And this is May," was all Count Roumovski replied. Then, for the first time since he had addressed her, he turned his eyes from her face, while the faintest smile played round his well-cut mouth.

"A number of things can happen in four months. Are you looking forward to your life as the wife of a priest? But I understand it is different in England to in my country; there I could not recommend the situation to you."

Stella found absolutely no answer to this. She only felt a sudden wild longing to cry out that the idea of being a curate's wife—even the wife of the bishop's junior young gentleman, with eight hundred a year of his own—had never appeared a thrilling picture, and was now causing her a feeling of loathing. She thought she ought to talk no longer to this stranger, and half rose from her seat.

He put out a protesting hand; both had been clasped idly over the *Times* until then without a movement.

"No—do—not go! I have disturbed you; I am sorry," he pleaded. "Listen. There is a great reception at your embassy to-morrow night for one of our royal family who is here. You will go, perhaps? If so, I will do so also, although I dislike parties, and there I will be presented to you with ceremony; it will appease that English convention in you. And after that I shall say to you a number of things; but I prefer to sit here and speak behind the *Times*."

At this instant he raised the paper, and appeared again the stranger almost entirely hidden from view. And Stella saw that her Uncle Erasmus was rapidly approaching her with an envelope in his hand. She seized her pen again, and continued her broken sentence to Eustace—her betrothed. Canon Ebley viewed the *Times* and its holder with suspicion for an instant, but its stillness reassured him, and he addressed his niece:

"Very civil of the embassy to send us a card for the reception to-morrow

night, Stella; I am glad we wrote names when we arrived. Your Aunt Caroline bids you accept, as her spectacles are upstairs."

Miss Rawson did as she was bid, and her uncle waited, fidgeting with his feet. He wished the stranger to put down the *Times*, which he wanted himself, or, at all events, to remove his long legs and hidden body from such a near proximity to his niece. They could not say a word that he could not overhear, Canon Ebley mused.

However, the unknown remained where he was, and turned a page of the paper with great deliberation.

"Your aunt will be ready to go out again now," the Uncle Erasmus announced as Stella placed her acceptance in the envelope. "You had better go up and put your hat on, my dear."

The *Times* rustled slightly, and Stella replied a little hurriedly: "I was just finishing a letter, uncle; then I will come."

"Very well," said Canon Ebley, not altogether pleased, as he walked away with the note.

The newspaper was lowered a few inches again, and the wise blue eyes beneath the saintly parted hair twinkled with irresistible laughter, and the deep voice said:

"He would greatly disapprove of our having conversed—the uncle—is it not so? How long are you going to stay in Rome?"

Stella smiled, too—she could not help it.

"A week—ten days, perhaps," she answered, and then rapidly addressed an envelope to the Reverend Eustace Medlicott.

"Perhaps, in that case, I can afford to wait until to-morrow night, unless it amuses you, as it does me, to circumvent people," Count Roumovski said. "We are all masters of our own lives, you know, once we have ceased to be children; it is only convention which persuades us to submit to others' authority."

Stella looked up, startled. Was this, indeed, true? And was it simply convention which had forced her into an

engagement with Eustace Medlicott and now forced her to go up and put on her hat and accompany her uncle and aunt to see the Lateran, when she would have preferred to remain where she was and discuss abstract matters with this remarkable stranger?

"The notion surprises you, one sees," Count Roumovski went on; "but it is true——"

"I suppose it is," said Stella lamely.

"I submit to no authority—I mean, as to the controlling of my actions and wishes. We must all submit to the laws of our country; to do so is the only way to obtain complete personal freedom."

"That sounds like a paradox," said Stella.

"I have just been thinking," he went on, without noticing the interruption, "it would be most agreeable to take a drive in my automobile late this afternoon, when your guardians have returned and are resting. If you feel you would care to come, I will wait in this hall from five to six. You need not take the least notice of me; you can walk past, out of the hotel, then turn to the left, and there in the square, where there are a few trees, you will see a large blue motor waiting. You will get straight in, and I will come and join you. Not any one will see or notice you; because of the trees one cannot observe from the windows. My chauffeur will be prepared, and I will return you safely to the same place in an hour."

Stella's brown eyes grew larger and larger. Some magnetic spell seemed to be dominating her; the idea was preposterous, and yet to agree to it was the strongest temptation she had ever had in her life. She was filled with a wild longing to live, to do what she pleased, to be free to enjoy this excitement before her wings should be clipped, and her outlook all gray and humdrum.

"I do not know if they will rest; I cannot say—I——" she blurted out tremblingly.

The stranger had put down the

Times, and was gazing into her face with a look almost of tenderness.

"There is no need to answer now," he said softly. "If Fate means us to be happy she will arrange it; I think you will come."

Miss Rawson started to her feet, and absently put her letter to her fiancé—which contained merely the sentence that they had arrived in Rome—into its envelope, and fastened it up.

"I must go now. Good-by," she said.

"It is not good-by," the Russian answered gravely. "By six o'clock we shall be driving in the Borghese Gardens, and hearing the nightingales sing."

As Stella walked to the lift with a tumultuously beating heart, she asked herself what all this could possibly mean, and why she was not angry, and why this stranger—whose appearance outraged all her ideas as to what an English gentleman should look like—had yet the power to fascinate her completely. Of course, she would not go for a drive with him—and yet, what would be the harm? After September she would never have a chance like this again. There would be only Eustace Medlicott and parish duties. Yes—if fate made it possible she would go!

And she went on to her room with an exhilarating sense of adventure coursing through her veins.

"I have found out the name of the peculiar-looking foreigner who sat near us last night," Canon Ebley said as they drove to the Lateran in a little Roman victoria. "It is Count Roumovski. I asked the hall porter—reprehensible curiosity I fear you will think, my dear Caroline, but there is something unaccountably interesting about him, as you must admit, although you disapprove of his appearance."

"I think it is quite dreadful," Mrs. Ebley sniffed; "and I hear from Martha that he has no less than two valets, and a suite of princely rooms here, and motor cars, and the whole passage on the second floor is filled with his trunks."

Martha had been Mrs. Ebley's maid for twenty-five years, and, as Stella

well knew, was fairly accurate in her recounting of the information she picked up. This luridly extravagant picture, however, did not appall her. And she found herself constantly dwelling upon it and the stranger all the time she followed her relations about in the gorgeous church.

Fate did not seem to be going to smile upon the drive project, however, for Mrs. Ebley, far from appearing tired, actually proposed tea in the hall when they got in; and there sat for at least half an hour, while Stella saw Count Roumovski come in and sit down and leisurely begin a cigarette as he glanced at an Italian paper. He was so intensely still, always peace seemed to breathe from his atmosphere; but the very sight of him appeared to exasperate the Aunt Caroline more and more.

"I wonder that man is not ashamed to be seen in a respectable place," she snapped, "with his long hair and his bracelet—such effeminacy is perfectly disgusting, Erasmus."

"I really cannot help it, my dear," Canon Ebley replied irritably, "and I rather like his face."

"Erasmus!" was all Mrs. Ebley could say, and prepared to return to her room. Dinner would be at a quarter to eight, she told Stella at her door, and recommended an hour's quiet reading up of the guidebook while resting to her niece.

It was a quarter to six before Miss Rawson descended the stairs to the hall again. She had deliberately made up her mind; she would go and drive with the count. She would live and amuse herself if it was only for this once in her life, come what might of it! And since he would be presented with all respectable ceremony at the embassy the following night, it could not matter a bit—and if it did— Well, she did not care!

He was sitting there as immovable as before, and she thrilled as she crossed the hall. She was so excited and frightened that she could almost have turned back when she reached the street, but there, standing by the trees,

was a large blue motor car, and as she advanced the chauffeur stepped forward and opened the door, and she got in—and before she had time to realize what she had done, Count Roumovski had joined her, and sat down by her side.

"You have no wrap," he said. "I thought you would not have, so I had prepared this"—and he indicated a man's gray, Russian, unremarkable-looking cloak, which, however, proved to be lined with fine sable—"and here also is a veil. If you will please me by putting them on, we can then have the auto open, and no one will recognize you—even should we meet your uncle and aunt. That is fun, is it not?"

Stella had thrown every consideration to the winds, except the determination to enjoy herself. Years of rebellion at the boredom of her existence seemed to be urging her on. So she meekly slipped into the cloak, and wrapped the veil right over her hat, and they started. Her heart was thumping so with excitement she could not have spoken for a moment.

But as they went rapidly on through the crowded streets her companion's respectful silence reassured her. There seemed to be some rapport between them; she was conscious of a feeling that he understood her thoughts and was not misjudging her.

"You are like a little, frightened bird," he said presently. "And there is nothing to cause you the least fear. We shall soon come to the lovely gardens, and watch the lowering sun make its beautiful effects in the trees, and we shall hear the nightingales throbbing out love songs. The world is full of rest and peace—when we have had enough passion and strife and want its change—but you do not know anything of it, and this simple drive is causing you tumults and emotions, is it not so?"

"Yes," said Stella, with a feeling that she had burned all her ships.

"It is because you have never been allowed to be *you*, I suppose," he went on softly. "So doing a natural and simple thing seems frightful, because it would seem so to the rigid aunt. Now,

I have been *me* ever since I was born; I have done just what seemed best to me. Do you suppose I am not aware that the way my hair is cut is a shock to most civilized persons, and that you English would strongly disapprove of my watch and my many other things? But I like them myself; it is no trouble for one of my valets to draw a straight line with a pair of scissors; and if I must look at the time I prefer to look at something beautiful. I am entirely uninfluenced by the thoughts or opinions of any people; they do not exist for me except in so far as they interest me and are instructive or amusing. I never permit myself to be bored for an instant."

"How good that must be!" Stella ventured to say. Her courage was returning.

"Civilized human beings turn existence into a prison," he went on meditatively, "and load themselves with shackles because some convention prevents their doing what would give them innocent pleasure. If I had been under the dominion of these things we should not now be enjoying this delightful drive—at least, it is delightful to me—to be thus near you, and alone, out of doors."

Stella did not speak; she was altogether too full of emotion to trust herself to words just yet. They had turned into the Corso by now, and, as ever, it appeared as though it were a holiday, so thronged with pedestrians was the whole thoroughfare. Count Roumovski seemed quite unconcerned, but Miss Rawson shrank back into her corner, a new fear in her heart.

"Do not be so nervous," her companion said gently. "I always calculate the chances before I suggest another person's risking anything for me. They are a million to one that any one could recognize you in that veil and that cloak; believe me, although I am not of your country, I am at least a gentleman, and would not have persuaded you to come if there had been any danger of complications for you."

Stella clasped her hands convulsively, and he drew a little nearer her.

"Do put all agitating ideas out of your mind," he said, his blue eyes, with their benign expression, seeking hers and compelling them at last to look at him. "Do you not understand that it is foolish to spoil what we have by useless tremors? You are here with me—for the next hour—shall we not try to be happy?"

"Yes," murmured Miss Rawson, and allowed herself to be magnetized into calmness.

"When we have passed the Piazza del Popolo and the entrance to the Pinacio, I will have the car opened; then we can see all the charming young green, and I will tell you of what these gardens were long ago, and you shall see them with new eyes."

Stella, by some sort of magic, seemed to have recovered all her self-possession as his eyes looked into hers, and she chatted to him naturally, and the next half hour passed like some fairy tale. His deep, quiet voice took her into realms of fancy that her imagination had never dreamed about. His cultivation was immense, and the Rome of the Caesars appeared to be as familiar to him as that of nineteen-eleven.

The great beauty of the Borghese Gardens was at its height at the end of May; the nightingales throbbed from the bushes, and the air was full of the fresh, exquisite scents of the late spring as the day grew toward evening and all nature seemed full of beauty and peace. It can easily be imagined what this drive meant, then, to a fine, sensitive young woman, whose every instinct of youth and freedom and life had been crushed into undeveloped nothingness by years of gray convention in an old-fashioned English cathedral town.

Stella Rawson forgot that she and this Russian were strangers, and she talked to him unrestrainedly, showing glimpses of her inner self that she had not known she possessed. It was certainly heaven, she thought, this drive, and worth all the Aunt Caroline's frowns.

Count Roumovski never said a word of love to her; he treated her with perfect courtesy and infinite respect; but

when at last they were turning back again he permitted himself once more to gaze deeply into her eyes, and Stella knew for the first time in her existence that some silences are more dangerous than words.

"You do not care at all now for the good clergyman you are affianced to," he said. "No—do not be angry; I am not asking a question—I am stating a fact. When lives have been hedged and controlled and *retenue* as yours has been, even the feelings lose character, and you cannot be sure of them, but the day is approaching when you will see clearly and—feel—much."

"I am sure it is getting very late," said Stella Rawson; and with difficulty she turned her eyes away, and looked over the green world.

Count Roumovski laughed softly, as if to himself. And they were silent until they came to the entrance gates again, when the chauffeur stopped and shut the car.

"We have at least snatched some moments of pleasure, have we not?" the owner whispered. "And we have hurt no one. Will you trust me again when I propose something which sounds to you wild?"

"Perhaps I will," Stella murmured rather low.

"When I was hunting lions in Africa I learned to keep my intelligence awake," he said calmly. "It is an advantage to me now in civilization. Nothing is impossible if one only keeps cool; if one becomes agitated one instantly connects oneself with all other currents of agitation, and one can no longer act with prudence or sense."

"I think I have always been very foolish," admitted Stella, looking down. "I seem to see everything differently now."

"What we are all striving after is happiness," Count Roumovski said. "Only we will not admit it, and nearly always spoil our own chances by drifting and allowing outside things to influence us. If you could see the vast plains of snow in my country, and the deep forests, with never a human being for miles and miles, you would under-

stand how nature grows to talk to one—and how small the littlenesses of the world appear." Then they were silent again, and it was not until they were rushing up the Via Nazionale and in a moment or two would have reached their destination that Count Roumovski said:

"Stella—that means a star—it is a beautiful name. I can believe you could be a star to shine upon any man's dark night—because you have a pure spirit, although it has been muffled by circumstance for all these years."

Then the automobile drew up by the trees, at perhaps two hundred yards from the hotel, near the baths of Diocletian.

"If you will get out here it will be best," Count Roumovski told her respectfully, "and walk along on the inner side. I will then drive to the door of the hotel, as usual."

"Thank you, and good-by," said Stella, and began untying the veil. He helped her at once, and in doing so his hand touched her soft pink cheek. She thrilled with a new kind of mad enjoyment, the like of which she had never felt, and then controlled herself and stamped it out.

"It has been very great pleasure to me," he said, and nothing more—no "good-by" or "au revoir" or anything, and he drew into the far corner as she got out of the car, letting the chauffeur help her. Nor did he look her way as he drove on. And Stella walked leisurely back to the hotel, wondering in her heart at the meaning of things.

No one noticed her entrance, and she was able to begin to dress for dinner without even Martha being aware that she had been absent. But as she descended in the lift with her uncle and aunt, it seemed as if the whole world and life itself were changed since the same time the night before.

And when they were entering the restaurant a telegram was put into Canon Ebley's hand; it was from the Reverend Eustace Medicott, sent from Turin, saying he would join them in Rome the following evening.

"Eustace has been preparing this de-

lightful surprise; I knew of it," the Aunt Caroline said, with conscious pride, "but I would not tell you, Stella, dear, in case something might prevent it. I feared to disappoint you."

"Thank you, aunt," Miss Rawson said, without too much enthusiasm, and took her seat where she could see the solitary occupant of a small table, surrounded by the obsequious waiters, already sipping his champagne.

He had not looked up as they passed. Nor did he appear once to glance in their direction. His whole manner was full of the same reflective calm as the night before. And for some unaccountable reason Stella Rawson's heart sank down lower and lower until at the end of the repast she looked pale and tired out.

Eustace, her betrothed, would be there on the morrow, and such things as drives in motor cars with strange Russian counts were only dreams, and not realities, she now felt.

CHAPTER III.

Next morning it fell about that Stella Rawson was allowed to go into the Museo Nazionale in the Diocletian baths, accompanied only by Martha, her uncle and aunt having decided they would take a rest and write their English letters. The museum was so near—a mere hundred yards—there could be no impropriety in their niece going there with Martha even in an exhibition year in Rome.

Stella was still suffering from a nameless sense of depression. Eustace's train would get in at about five o'clock, and he would accompany them to the embassy. A cousin of her own and Aunt Caroline's was one of the secretaries, and had already been written to about the invitation. So that even if Count Roumovski should be presented to her, and make the whole thing proper and correct, she would have no chance of any conversation. The brilliant sunlight felt incongruous, and hurt her, and she was glad to enter the shady ancient baths. She had glanced furtively to right and left in

the hotel as she came through the hall, but saw no one who resembled the Russian, and they had walked so quickly through the vestibule she had not remarked a tall figure coming from the staircase, nor had seen him give some rapid order to a respectful servant who was waiting about, and who instantly followed them. But if she had looked up as she paid for the two tickets at the barrier of the museum she would have seen this same lean man turn swiftly round and retreat in the direction of the hotel.

Martha was sulky and comatose on this very warm morning. She took no interest in sculpture. "Them naked creatures," she called any masterpieces undraped; and she resented being dragged out by Miss Stella, who always had fancies for art.

They walked round the cloisters first, a voyage of discovery to Miss Rawson, who looked a slim enough nymph herself in her lilac cambric frock and demure gray hat shading her big brown eyes.

Then suddenly from across the garden in the center she became aware that an archaic Apollo, clad in modern dress, had entered upon the scene, and the blood rushed to her cheeks, and her heart beat.

Martha puffed with the heat and exercise, and glanced with longing eyes at a comfortable stone bench in the shade.

"Would you like to rest here, Martha, you old dear?" Miss Rawson said. "There is not a creature about, and I will walk round and join you from the other side."

The Aunt Caroline's elderly maid easily agreed to this. It was true there did not seem to be any one adventurous looking, and Miss Stella would be more or less under her eye—and she was thoroughly tired with traveling and what not. So Stella found herself happily unchaperoned, except by Baedeker, as she strolled on.

The Russian had disappeared from view; the bushes and vases in the center of the garden plot gave only occasional chances to see people at a distance.

But when Stella had entered the Ludovici collection she perceived him to the right, gazing at the statue of the beautiful Mars.

He turned instantly, as though some one had told him she was near, and his calm eyes took in the fact that she was alone. The small room was empty but for the two, and he addressed her as he removed his hat.

"Good morning, mademoiselle," he said gravely. "Mars is a strong attraction. I knew I should presently find you here; so when I caught sight of your spiritual outline across the garden I came and—waited."

"He is most splendid looking, is he not?" Stella returned, trying to suppress the sudden tingle of pleasure that was thrilling her. "And look—how much character there is in his hands."

"Shall we go and study the others, or shall we find a bench in the garden and sit down and talk?" Count Roumovski asked serenely; and then smiled to himself as he noticed his companion's apprehensive glance in the direction where far-away Martha dozed in peace.

"It would be nice out of doors, but—" And Stella faltered.

"Do not let us be deprived of pleasure by any buts; there is one out there who will warn us when your maid wakes. See"—and he advanced toward the entrance door—"there is a bench by that rose tree where we can be comparatively alone."

Stella struggled no more with herself. After all, it was her last chance; Eustace Medlicott's train got in at five o'clock!

She had a sense of security, too; the complete serenity of her companion inspired confidence. She almost felt she would not care if Aunt Caroline herself slept instead of the elderly maid.

There was some slight change in Count Roumovski's manner to-day; he kept his eyes fixed on her face, and the things he said were less abstract and more personal. After an entrancing half hour she felt she had seen vivid pictures of his land and his home. But he was a great traveler, it appeared, and not so often there in later years.

"It is so agreeable to let the body move from place to place, and remain in a peaceful aloofness of the spirit all the time," he said at last. "To watch all the rushing currents which dominate human beings when they do not know how to manipulate them. If they did the millennium would come; but meanwhile it is reserved for the few who have learned them to enjoy this present plane we are on."

"You mean you can control events and shape your life as you please, then?" Stella asked, surprised, while she raised her sweet, shy eyes to his inquiringly. "I wish I knew how!"

"Shall I try to teach you, mademoiselle?" he said.

"Yes, indeed!"

"Then you must not look down all the time, even though the contemplation of your long eyelashes gives me a pleasure. I would prefer the eyes themselves. The eyes are the indication of what is passing in the soul, and I would study this moving panorama."

Stella's color deepened, but she met his blue orbs without flinching; so he went on:

"I had the fortune to be born a Russian, which has given me time to study these things. My country does not require my work beyond my being a faithful servant of my emperor. Since I am not a soldier, I can do as I choose. But you in England are now in a seething caldron, and it would be difficult, no doubt, for you to spend the hours required—although the national temperament would lend itself to all things calm if it were directed."

"But for myself," Stella demanded, "I am not a man, and need not interest myself in the nation's affairs—how can I grow to guide my own—as you seem to do?"

"Never permit yourself to be ruffled by anything, to commence with," Count Roumovski began gravely, while the pupils of his eyes appeared to grow larger. "Whatever mood you are in, you connect yourself with the cosmic current of that mood; you become in touch, so to speak, with all the other people who are under its dominion, and

so it gains strength, because unity is strength. If you can understand that as a basic principle, you can see that it is only a question of controlling yourself and directing your moods with those currents whose augmentation can bring you good. You must never be negative, and drift. You can be drawn in any adverse way if you do."

"I think I understand," said Stella, greatly interested.

"Then you must use your critical faculties, and make selections of what is best; and you must encourage common sense and distrust altruism. Sanity is the thing to aim at."

"Yes."

"The view of the world has become so distorted upon almost every point which started in good that nothing but a cultivation of our individual critical faculties can enable us to see the truth; and nine-tenths of civilized humanity have no real opinion of their own at all—they simply echo those of others."

"I feel that is true," said Stella, thinking of her own case.

"It is not because a thing is bad or good that it succeeds; merely how much strength we put into the desire for it," he went on.

"But surely we must believe that good will win over evil!" And the brown eyes looked almost troubled, and his softened as he looked at her.

"The very fact of believing that would make it come to pass by all these psychic laws. Whatever we really believe we draw," he said almost tenderly.

"Then if I were to believe all the difficulties and uncertainties would be made straight, and just go on calmly, I should be happy, should I?" she asked—and there was an unconscious pathos in her voice which touched him deeply.

"Certainly," he answered. "You have not had a fair chance; probably you have never been allowed to do a single thing of your own accord—have you?"

"N-no," said Stella.

"In the beginning, were you engaged to this good clergyman of your own wish?" And his eyes searched her face.

She stiffened immediately—the train-

ing of years took offense—and she answered rather stiffly:

"I do not think you have the right to ask me such a question, Count Roumovski."

He was entirely unabashed. He stroked his pointed, silky beard for a moment; then he said calmly:

"Yes, I have; you agreed that I should teach you how to shape your life as you please, you must remember. It is rather essential that I should know the truth of this matter before I can go further; you must see that."

"We can avoid the subject."

"It would be '*Hamlet*' without *Hamlet*, then," he smiled. "One could draw up no scheme of rules and exercises unless one had some idea of how far the individual was responsible for the present state of things. If it was your wish in the beginning, or if you were coerced, makes all the difference."

Stella was silent; only she nervously plucked an unoffending rose which grew upon a bush beside them; she pulled its petals off, and kept her eyes lowered, and Sasha Roumovski smiled a wise smile.

"You have unconsciously answered me," he said, "and your agitation proves that not only are you aware that you did not become engaged of your own wish, but you are afraid to face the fact and admit that its aspect appalls you. You must remember in your country—where I understand divorce is not *très bien vu*, especially among the clergy—the affair is for life; and the joy or the gall of it could be infinite."

She raised two beseeching eyes to his face at last.

"Oh, do not let us talk about it!" she pleaded. "It is so warm and pleasant here—I want to be happy."

He looked at her for a while with penetrating eyes; then he said gently:

"It is a man's province to take care of a woman." And his attractive voice filled with a new cadence. "I see you are in need of direction. Leave all to me, and forget there is any one else in the world for the moment but our two selves. Did you know that I

thought you looked particularly sweet last night, but rather pale?"

"You never looked at me at all," said Stella before she was aware of it, and then blushed crimson at the inference of her speech. He would be able to understand perfectly that she must have been observing him all the time to be conscious of this.

A gleam of gladness came into his eyes.

"I would like to watch you always openly if I might," he whispered. "Your little face is like a flower in its delicate tints, and your eyes are true and tender and asking so many questions of life, and sometimes they are veiled and misty, and then they look wise and courageous. I am beginning to know all their changes."

"Then, in that case, monotony will set in." Stella was almost arch—the day was so glorious!

"I am not afraid of that," he said. "I always know what I want, and what is worth while. I do not value my three matchless pearls the less because I know their every iridescence; on the contrary, I grow more fond of them, and wear them every night in preference to any others."

They were silent for a moment after this. He was examining her minutely with his wise, calm eyes. He was noting the sensitive curve of the pretty, full lips, the tender droop of the set of her head, the gracious charm of her little, regular features, and the intelligence of her broad brows. With all her simplicity, she looked no fool or weakling. And to think that the narrow code of those who surrounded her should force this sweet young creature into the gray walls of a prison house, when she became the English clergyman's wife! It was too revolting to him. Count Roumovski suddenly made up his mind, trained to instantaneous decision by his bent of studies, and sure and decided in its action. And if Stella had looked up then she would have seen a keen gleam in the peaceful blue of his eyes. He drew her on to talk of her home and her tastes; she loved many things he did, he found, and she

was so eager to hear and to learn their meaning. He grew to feel a sort of pride and the pleasure of a teacher when directing an extremely intelligent child. There were no barriers of stupidity into whatever regions the subjects might wander. They spent an hour of pure joy investigating each other's thoughts. And both knew they were growing more than friends.

Then Stella rose suddenly to her feet. A clock struck twelve.

"You said one must not be negative, and drift," she announced demurely, "so I am being decided, and must now go back to Martha again."

"Ivan has not warned us that she is thinking of stirring," Count Roumovski said. "I told him to, and he will let us know in plenty of time. You surely do not breakfast until half past twelve, do you?"

"Ivan—who is Ivan?" Stella asked.

"He is a servant of mine who does what he is bid," her companion answered. "To have peace and enjoy oneself, one must calculate and arrange for events. Had we only trusted to the probability of your maid's sleeping, I should have had to be upon the lookout, and my uneasiness would have communicated itself to you, and we should have had no happy hour; but I made a certainty of safety, and unconsciously you trusted me to know, and so we have been content."

Stella was thrilled. So he had taken all this trouble? He must be a good deal interested in her, then; and, feeling sure of this, womanlike, she immediately took advantage of it to insist upon leaving him.

"Very well," he said, when he could not dissuade her. "To-night the wheel of fortune will revolve for us all, and it remains to be seen who will draw a prize and who a blank."

Then he walked by her side to where they saw the quiet servant standing, a motionless sentinel, and here Count Roumovski bowed and turned on his heel, while Stella advanced to the bench on which the comfortable Martha peacefully slept.

This latter was full of defense when she awoke. She had not closed an eye, but thought Miss Stella was enjoying "them statues" better without her—which was, indeed, true if she had guessed.

Miss Rawson ate very little luncheon—the Russian did not appear—and immediately after it she was taken, as a treat, to see the Borghese Gardens by her uncle and aunt! It behoved her not to be tired by more sight-seeing, since her betrothed would arrive when they returned for tea, and would expect her to be bright and on the alert to please him, Aunt Caroline felt. As for Stella, as that moment approached it seemed to her that the end of all joy had come.

CHAPTER IV.

The Reverend Eustace Medlicott, when the stains of travel had been removed from his thin person, came down to tea in the hall of the Grand Hotel with a distinct misgiving in his heart. He did not approve of it as a place of residence for his betrothed. Another and equally well-drained hostelry might have been found for the party, he thought, where such evidences of worldly occupations and amusements would not so forcibly strike the eye. Music with one's meals savored of paganism. He was still very emaciated with his Lenten fast. It took him until July generally to begin to pick up again; and he was tired with his journey. Stella was not there to greet him—only the Aunt Caroline—and he felt a sense of injury creeping over him. She might have been in time. Nancy Ruggles, the bishop's second daughter, had given him tea and ministered to his wants in a spirit of solicitous devotion every day since the Ebleys had left Exminster; but Nancy's hair was not full of sunlight, nor did her complexion suggest cream and roses. Things which, to be sure, the Reverend Eustace Medlicott felt he ought not to dwell upon; they were fleshly lusts, and should be discouraged.

He had been convinced that celibacy

was the only road to salvation for a priest until Stella Rawson's fair young charms had unconsciously undermined this conviction. But even if he had been able to arrange his conscience to his liking upon the vital point, he felt he must fight bravely against allowing himself or his betrothed to get any pleasure out of the affair. It was better to marry than to burn—he had St. Paul's authority for this—but when he felt emotion toward Stella because of her loveliness, he was afterward very uncomfortable in his thoughts, and it took him at least an hour to throw dust in his own eyes in regard to the nature of his desire for her, which he determined to think was only of the spirit. Love, for him, was no god to be exalted, but a too strong beast to be resisted, and every one of his rites was to be succumbed to shame-facedly and under protest. Thus did he criticize the scheme of his Creator, like many another before him.

He sat now in the hall of the Grand Hotel, at Rome, feeling ill at ease, and expressed some mild disapproval of the surroundings to Mrs. Ebley, who fired up at once. She was secretly enjoying herself extremely, and allowed the drains to assume gigantic proportions in her reasons for their choice of abode. So there was nothing more to be said—and Stella, looking rather pale, presently came down the steps from the corridor where their lift was situated, and joined the group in the far corner of the large hall.

She was so slender and fresh and graceful, and even in the week's sightseeing in Paris she seemed to have picked up a new air; though she wore the same gray Sunday dress her fiancé was accustomed to see at home, it appeared to be put on differently, and she had altered the doing of her hair. There was no doubt about it, his future wife was a most delectable-looking creature; but these tendencies toward adornment of the person which he observed must be checked at once.

They shook hands with decorous cordiality, and Stella sat down demurely in the vacant chair. She felt as cold as

ice toward him, and looked it more or less. It made Mr. Medlicott nervous, although she answered gently enough when he addressed her. Inwardly she was trying to overcome the growing revulsion she was experiencing. Tricks of speech, movements of hands, even the way Eustace's hair grew were all irritating her. She only longed to contradict every word the poor man said, and she felt wretched and unjust and at war with herself and fate. At last things almost came to a point when he moved his chair so that he should be close to her, and a little apart from the others, and whispered, with an air of absolute proprietorship:

"My little Stella has changed her sweetly modest way of hairdressing. I hardly think the new style is suitable to my retiring dove."

"Why, it is only parted in the middle and brushed back into a simple knot," Miss Rawson retorted, with sparkling eyes. "How can you be so ridiculous, Eustace? It is merely because it is becoming, and more in the fashion, than you object; there is nothing the least remarkable in the style itself."

Mr. Medlicott's thin lips grew into a straight line.

"It is that very point—the suggestion of fashion—that I object to; the wife of a clergyman cannot be too careful not to make herself attractive or remarkable in any way," he said sententiously, his obstinate chin a little forward.

"But I am not a clergyman's wife yet," said Stella, with some feeling, "and can surely enjoy a few of the things of my age until I am—and doing my hair how I please is one of them."

Mr. Medlicott shrugged his shoulders; he refused to continue this unseemly altercation with his betrothed. He would force her to see reason when once she should be his wife; until then he might have to waive his authority, but would show her by his manner that she had offended him; and, judging from the attitudes of the adoring spinsters he had left at Exminster, that should be punishment enough.

He turned to the Aunt Caroline now, and addressed her exclusively, and Stella rebelliously moved her seat back a few inches, and looked across the room; and at that moment the tall, odd-looking Russian came in, and retired to a seat far on the other side, exactly opposite them. Here he ordered a hock and seltzer with perfect unconcern, and smoked his cigarette. Miss Rawson could hardly bear it.

"There is that extraordinary man again, Stella," Mrs. Ebley turned to her and said. "I thought he had gone, as he was not at luncheon to-day. I am sure your fiancé will agree with me that such an appearance is sacrilegious; he must know he looks like a saint; and I am quite sure, from what I have heard from Martha, he is not one at all. He lives in the greatest luxury, Eustace," she continued, turning to the Reverend Mr. Medlicott, "and probably does no good to any one in the world."

"How can you suppose that, Aunt Caroline?" Stella answered, with some spirit. "It is surely very uncharitable to judge of people by their appearance and—and what Martha repeats to you."

Mrs. Ebley gasped; never in her whole life had her niece spoken to her in this tone. She to be rebuked! It was unspeakable. She could only glare behind her glasses. What had come to the girl in the last two days? If this manner was the result of travel, far better to have stayed at home.

Here Canon Ebley joined in, hoping to bring peace.

"You have told Eustace what is in store for him to-night, have you not, Caroline, my dear?" he asked. "We have to put on our best, and take our ladies to the embassy to a rout, Eustace," he went on genially. "There is a Russian grand duke and duchess passing through, it appears, who are going to be entertained."

"There will be no dancing, I suppose," said Mr. Medlicott primly, "because, if so, I am sorry, but I cannot accompany you. It is not that I disapprove of dancing for others," he hastened to add, "but I do not care to watch it myself. And I do not think

it wise for Stella to grow to care for it, either."

"It is merely a reception," Mrs. Ebley said, "and it will be a very interesting sight."

Stella sat silent; she was overcome with the whole situation, and her fiancé grew more distasteful to her every moment; how had she ever been persuaded to be engaged to such a person?—while the attraction of the strange-looking Russian seemed to increase. In spite of the grotesque hair and unusual beard, there was an air of great distinction about him. His complete unconsciousness and calm were so remarkable. You might take him for an eccentric gentleman, but certainly a gentleman, and with an extraordinary magnetism, she felt. While, once you had talked to him, he seemed to cast a spell over you. But beyond this she only knew that she was growing more unhappy every moment, and that by her side one man represented everything that was tied and bound in sentiment and feeling and existence, and that across the hall another opened the windows of her reason and imagination, and exhorted her to be free and herself.

Presently she could bear it no more. She got up rather suddenly, and, saying she was very tired and had letters to write, she left them, and went toward the lift.

"Stella is not at all like herself," Mr. Medlicott said when she had disappeared from view. "I trust she is not sickening with Roman fever."

Meanwhile, Miss Rawson had reached her room and pulled her writing case in front of her. There were one or two girl friends who ought to be written to, but the sheets remained blank; and in about ten minutes there was a gentle knock at the door, and on opening it she saw Count Roumovski's discreet-looking servant, who handed her a note respectfully, and then went on his way without a word.

How agreeable it must be to have well-trained servants to do one's bidding like that, she thought; and then went back eagerly to her window to

read the missive. It had no beginning or date, and was just a few lines:

I have observed the whole situation, and judged of the character of your fiancé. I know how you feel. Do not be depressed—remain calm and trust me; circumstances can always be directed in the hands of a strong man. I will have the honor to be presented to you and to your family soon after you arrive at the embassy to-night. All is well.

There was no signature, and the writing was rather large and unlike any she had seen before.

Suddenly her feeling of unrest left her, and a lightness of heart took its place. She was living, at all events, and the horizon was not all gray. It seemed almost delightful to be putting on a real evening dress presently—even though it was a rather homely white thing with a pink sash—and to be going down to the restaurant in it with Aunt Caroline in front in her best black velvet and point lace.

That lady's desire to be in time at the party alone determined her to this breach of the rules—and there were Eustace and Uncle Erasmus in their stiff clerical evening coats, awaiting them in the corridor—while, as luck would have it, the lift stopped at the second floor to admit the Russian. He got in with his usual air of being unaware that he was not alone—though Stella could feel that he was touching her hand—perhaps it was unconsciously. He seemed to radiate some kind of joy for her always, and the pink grew to that of a June rose in her cheeks, and her brown eyes shone like two stars.

"That was the man you spoke of in the hall, Mrs. Ebley, was it not?" Eustace Medlicott's intoning voice said as they went along to the restaurant. "He certainly is a most remarkable person to look at close, but I do not dislike his face; it has noble lines."

"Really! How condescending of you!" Stella almost said aloud. But the Aunt Caroline answered serenely:

"Perhaps I am prejudiced, Eustace, but want of convention always shocks me to such a degree that I cannot appreciate anything else."

Stella almost enjoyed her dinner, she was so excited with the prospect of some unknown coming events, and she had the satisfaction of observing that once Count Roumovski actually turned his head in their direction, and met her eyes. His were full of a whimsical smile for the instant he looked, and then he relapsed into his habitual indifference.

The crowd had begun to thicken when they got to the embassy, and they waited among them for the royalties' arrival, Stella looking at everything with fresh, interested eyes. When this ceremony was over, people began to disperse about the large rooms, and Miss Rawson was conscious that her strange secret acquaintance was in conversation with the grand duke and duchess; she had not seen him come in. The Aunt Caroline noticed this, too, and drew her attention to the fact.

"Look, Stella, that dreadful man is talking to royalty!" she said. "I suppose he must be a gentleman, after all; one can never tell with foreigners, as their titles mean nothing, and half of them are assumed. Your Uncle Cardford had a valet once who afterward was arrested for posing as a Polish count."

"I should think any one could see this man was a gentleman, Aunt Caroline," Stella answered, "even without his talking to royalties."

They were soon joined by the secretary cousin, who was charmed to welcome so pretty a relation to Rome, and was profuse in his apologies for not having been able to do more than leave cards upon them as yet.

"We should so like to know the names of the celebrities," Mrs. Ebley said; "especially can you tell us about the very curious-looking person now conversing with her imperial highness? He is at our hotel."

"That—oh, that is by far the most interesting man here; it is the famous Count Roumovski. He is a most celebrated traveler; he has been all over the world and Africa and Asia, in un-accessible places. He is a fabulously rich Russian—a real Muscovite from

near Moscow, and he does everything and anything he pleases. He gives enormous sums for the encouragement of science. He is immensely intelligent—he lunched at the embassy to-day."

"Really!" said the Aunt Caroline, somewhat impressed. "His appearance is greatly against him."

"Oh, do you think so?" said the cousin. "I think it adds to his attraction; it is such superlative audacity. No Englishman would have the nerve to cut his hair like that."

"I should hope not!" Mrs. Ebley said severely, and dropped the subject.

"To think of this charming rosebud of a girl going to marry Eustace Medlicott—insufferable, conceited prig! I remember him at Oxford," the cousin was musing to himself. "Lord Cardford is an old stick-in-the-mud, or he would have prevented that. She is his own niece, and one can see by her frock that the poor child never even goes to London."

At this moment they saw the Russian count putting his heels together and bowing himself out of the circle of his royalties; and, straight as a dart, he came over to where their group was standing, and whispered to the cousin—Mr. Deanwood—who then asked if he might present Count Roumovski to the Aunt Caroline and the rest.

When this ceremony was over, Mrs. Ebley found herself conversing with her whilom object of contempt, and becoming gradually under the influence of his wonderful charm, while Stella stood there trembling with the wildest excitement she had yet known. The words of Eustace, her betrothed, talking to her, carried no meaning to her brain; her whole intelligence was strung up to catch what the others were saying.

With great dexterity, the Russian presently made the conversation general, and drew her into it, and then he said, with composure, that the gardens were illuminated, and as it was such a hot night would mademoiselle like to take a turn that way, to have some refreshment? At the same moment Mr. Deanwood gave Mrs. Ebley

his arm, and they all moved forward, followed by Canon Ebley and the Reverend Eustace Medlicott, with no great joy upon his face.

Stella, meanwhile, felt herself being drawn rapidly ahead, and so maneuvered that in a moment or two they had completely lost sight of the rest of the relations, and were practically alone in a crowd.

"At last!" Count Roumovski whispered. "Even I, who am generally calm, was beginning to feel I should rush over, throw prudence to the winds, and—" Then he stopped abruptly, and Stella felt her heart thump in her throat, while her little hand on his arm was pressed against his side.

They made the pretense of taking some refreshment at the buffet, and then went toward the open doors of the garden. The part all round the house was illuminated, and numbers of people strolled about—the night was deliciously warm. Count Roumovski seemed to know the paths, for he drew his companion to a seat just beyond the radius of the lights, and they sat down upon a bench under a giant tree. He had not spoken a word, but now he leaned back and deliberately looked into her eyes, while his voice, with vibrations of feeling in it which thrilled Stella, whispered in her ear:

"It cannot go on, of course. You agree with me about that, do you not?"

"What cannot go on?" she asked to gain time to recover her composure.

"This situation," he answered. "I am sure now that I love you, and I want to teach you a number of things—the first in importance being that you shall love me."

"Oh, you must not say this!" Stella protested feebly.

"Yes, I must, and you will listen to me, little star."

He drew nearer to her, and the amazing power of propinquity began to assert itself. She felt as if the force to resist him were leaving her; she was trembling all over with delicious thrills.

"I made up my mind almost immediately I saw you, sweet child," he went on, "that you were what I have been

waiting for all my life. You are good and true, and balanced, or you will be that when I have made your love education. Stella, look at me with those soft eyes, and tell me that I mean something to you already, and that the worthy Mr. Medlicott does not exist any more."

"I—I—but I have only known you for two days," Stella answered confusedly; she was so full of emotion that she dared not trust herself further.

"Does time count, then, so much with conventional people?" he demanded. "For me it has no significance in relation to feeling. If you would only look at me instead of down at those small hands, then you would not be able to tell me these foolish things."

This was so true that Stella could not deny it; her breath came rather fast; it was the supreme moment her life had yet known.

"You are frightened because the training of your education still holds you, and not nature. Your acquired opinion tells you you are engaged to another man and ought not to listen to me."

"Of course I ought not to," she murmured.

"Of course you ought; how else can you come to any conclusion if you do not hear my arguments, sweet, foolish one?"

She did look at him now with two startled eyes.

"Listen attentively, darling pupil and sweet love," he said. He was leaning with one arm on the back of the bench supporting his head on his hand, turned quite toward her, who sat with clasped, nervous fingers clutching her fan. His other hand lay idly on his knee; his whole attitude was very still. The soft lights were just enough for him to see distinctly her small face and shining hair; his own face was in shadow, but she could feel the magnetism of his eyes penetrating through her very being.

"You were coerced by those in charge of you," he went on, in a level voice of argument, which yet broke into notes of tenderness; "you were influ-

eneed into becoming engaged to this man, who is ridiculously unsuited to you. You, so full of life and boundless joy. You, who will learn all of love's meaning presently, and what it makes of existence, and what God meant by giving it to us mortals. You are intended by nature to be a complete woman if you did but know it; but such a life, tied to that half-fish man, would atrophy all that is finest in your character. You would grow really into what they are trying to make you appear, after years of hopelessness and suffering. Do you not feel all this, little star—tell me?"

"Yes," Stella answered, "it is true; I have seemed to feel the cords and the shackles pulling at me often, but never that they were unbearable until I—spoke with you—and you put new thoughts into my head."

"I did well, then. And because of a silly convention you would ruin all your life by going on with these ways. It is unthinkable!" And his deep voice vibrated with feeling. "It is a mistake, that is all, and can be rectified. If you were already married to this man I would not plead so, because then you would have crossed the Rubicon and assumed responsibilities which you would have to accept or suffer the consequences. But this preliminary bond can be broken without hurt to either side. A man of the good clergyman's type will not suffer in his emotions at the loss of you; he suffices unto himself for those; his vanity will be wounded, that is all. And surely it is better that should gall for a little than that you should spoil your life. Sweet flower, realize yourself these things—that sunny hair and that beautiful skin and those velvet eyes were made for the joy and glory of a man, not for temptations to a strict priest, who would resent their power as a sin every time he felt himself influenced by their charm. Gods above! He would not know what to do with you, heart of me!"

Stella was thrilling with exquisite emotion, but the influence of her strict and narrow bringing up could not be

quite overcome in these few moments. She longed to be convinced, and yet some altruistic sentiment made her feel still some qualms and misgivings. If she should be causing Eustace great pain by breaking her engagement, if it were very wrong to go against her uncle and aunt—especially her Aunt Caroline, her own mother's sister—She clasped her little hands nervously, and looked up in this strong man's face with pathetic, pleading intensity.

"Oh, please tell me what ought I to do, then—what is right?" she implored. "And because I want so much to believe you I fear it must be wrong to do so."

He leaned nearer to her, and spoke earnestly. His stillness was almost ominous, it gave the impression of such immense self-control, and his voice was as those bass notes of the priests of St. Isaac's in his own northern land.

"Dear, honest little girl," he said tenderly, "I worship your goodness. And I know you will presently see the truth. Love is of God, and is imperious; and because she loves him is the only one reason why a woman should give her life to a man. Quite apart from the law which proclaims that each individual must be the arbiter of his own fate, and not succumb to the wishes of others, it would be an ethical sin for you to marry the worthy Mr. Medlicott—not loving him. Surely you can see this?"

"Yes, yes; it would be dreadful!" she murmured. "But Aunt Caroline—she caused me to accept him—I mean, she wanted me to so much. I never really felt anything for him myself, and lately—ever since the beginning, in fact—I have been getting more and more indifferent to him."

"Then surely it is plain that you must be free of him, darling. Throw all the responsibility upon me, if you will; I promise to take every care of you. And I want you only to promise you will follow each step that I explain to you—" Then he broke off, and the seriousness of his tone changed to one of caressing tenderness. "But first I must know for certain, little star, shall

I be able to teach you to love me—as I shall love you?"

"Yes," was all Stella could utter; and then, gaining more voice, she went on: "I do not know—I could not guess—what that would mean—to love—but I do—"

He answered her with fond triumph:

"Now you are beginning to understand, darling child—that is enough for me to know for the present. In your country a man asks a woman to marry him. He says 'Will you marry me?'—is it not so? Of course, I need not say that to you, because you know that is what I mean. When these wearisome thongs are off your wrists you will belong to me, and come with me into my country and be part of my life."

"Ah!" whispered Stella; the picture seemed one of heaven, that was all.

"You must have freedom to assert your individuality, Stella," he continued. "I can but show you the way and give you a new point of view; but I will never try to rule you and drag you to mine. I will never put any chains upon you but those of love. Do they sound as if they would be too heavy, dearest?"

"I think not," she said very low. "I feel as though I were looking into a beautiful garden from the top of an ugly, barren, cold mountain. I shall like to come down and go in among the unknown flowers."

"It will be so glorious for us," he said exultantly, "because we have still all the interesting things to find out about each other—" And then, her sweet face so very near him, the temptation to caress her became too intense; he quivered and changed his position, clasping his hands.

"Darling," he said hoarsely, "we must soon go back to the company, because, although I count always upon my will to make my actions obey it, still I can hardly prevent myself from seizing you in my arms and kissing your tender lips—and that I must not do—as yet—"

Stella drew herself together; the temptation was convulsing her also,

though she did not guess it. She looked up into his blue eyes there in the shadow, and saw the deep reverence in them, and she understood, and loved him with her soul.

He did not so much as touch her dress; indeed, now that he had won his fight, he moved a little farther from her, and resumed his calm voice:

"The first thing we shall do is to stroll back through the people and find the aunt; I will then leave you with her, and soon it will be time to go home. Do not make much conversing with any of them to-night; leave everything to me. I will see the Reverend Mr. Medlicott when we return to the hotel. Whatever they say to you to-morrow, remain firm in your simple determination to break your engagement. Argue with them not at all. I will see your uncle in the morning and demand your hand. They will be shocked, horrified, scandalized; we will make no explanations. If they refuse their consent, then you must be brave, and the day after to-morrow you must come to my sister. She will have arrived by then; she was in Paris, and I telegraphed for her to join me immediately. The Princess Urazov she is called. She will receive you with affection, and you will stay with her until the formalities can be arranged, when we shall be married, and—but I cannot permit myself to think of the joy of that—for the moment."

Stella's eyes, with trust and love, were now gazing into his, and he rose abruptly to his feet.

"You may, when you are alone again, think that it is heartless to go quite contrary to your relations like this, because they have brought you up; but remember that marriage is an act which can mean almost life or death to a woman, and that no human beings have any right to coerce you in this matter. You are of age, and so am I, and we are only answerable to God and to the laws of our countries—not to individuals."

"I will try to think of it like that," said Stella, greatly moved; and then, with almost childish irrelevance, which

touched him deeply, she asked: "What must I call you, please?"

"Oh, you sweetest 'star!'" he exclaimed. "Do not tempt me too strongly—I love you wildly, and I want to hold you in my arms and explain everything with your little head here on my breast; but I must not—must not yet. Call me Sasha. Say it now that I may hear its sound in your dear voice—and then we must fly, fly back to the lights, or I cannot answer for myself."

She whispered it softly, and a shiver ran through all his tall frame; and he said, with tender masterfulness:

"Say 'Sasha, I love you.'" And this she did also, and then he almost brusquely placed her hand upon his arm, and led her among the people and so to her frowning relations; and then he bowed a correct good night.

CHAPTER V.

No one could have been more surprised than the Reverend Eustace Medlicott at the behavior of his betrothed. Far from showing any contrition for her unseemly absence upon the arm of a perfect stranger, and a foreigner to boot, Stella had returned to the fold of her relations' group with a demure and radiant face; and when Eustace had ventured some querulous reproaches she had cut him short by saying she had done as she wished and did not intend to listen to any remarks about it.

"You will have to learn more humbleness of mind, my dear child," he retorted sternly. "I cannot allow you to reply to your future husband in this independent tone."

"I shall just answer as I please," said Stella, and felt almost inclined to laugh—he looked so cross and amazed. Then she turned and talked to the cousin, Mr. Deanwood, and took no further notice of him.

Mr. Medlicott burned with annoyance. Stella would really have to be careful, or he would not go on with the match; he had no intention of taking to wife a woman who would defy him. There was Nancy Ruggles ready

to be his slave—and others besides her. And his career would be just as well assisted by the bishop's daughter as by Canon Ebley's niece, even though her uncle was a crotchety and unknown lord, patron of two fat livings. But Stella, with a rebellious little curl loosened on her snowy neck, and a rebellious pout upon her cherry lips, was so very alluring a creature to call one's own, the desire of the flesh, which he called by any other name, fought hard with his insulted spirit, though to give in would be too ignominious. She must say she was sorry first, and then he could find it in his heart to forgive her. But the opportunity to show this magnanimity was not vouchsafed to him by fate, for other people were introduced to the party by Mr. Deanwood, and he did not exchange a word alone with his erring fiancée until she said a cold good night in the hall of the Grand Hotel.

"Stella, remain for a moment; I wish to speak to you," he said, in the voice in which he was accustomed to read the burial service.

But she feigned not to hear, and followed her Aunt Caroline's black velvet train on to the lift, and at that same moment a discreet-looking foreign servant came up and handed him a note.

He read it in surprise; who could be sending him a note at a quarter past twelve at night?

DEAR SIR: I shall be greatly obliged if you can spare to me half an hour before retiring to your rest, to converse upon a matter of importance. I had the honor of making your acquaintance to-night at your embassy. If you will grant me this favor, I will wait upon you immediately in the hall, or, if you prefer, my sitting room; my servant could conduct you here, and we shall have the advantage of being entirely undisturbed. I remain, sir, yours truly,

SASHA ROUMOVSKI.

Eustace Medlicott gasped with astonishment. This Russian gentleman was evidently in need of his ministrations and perhaps advice. He would go to his room certainly; there were still some people in the hall having late coffee and refreshment after the theater.

He indicated by a condescending

movement that he was ready to follow the waiting servant, and soon found himself being shown into Count Roumowski's sitting room. It was luxuriously appointed, and presented every appearance of manly comfort. There were quantities of books and papers about, and the smell of excellent cigars, and put carelessly aside were various *objets d'art* which antique dealers had evidently sent for his grand seigneur's approval.

Count Roumowski was standing by the mantelpiece, and looked very tall and commanding in his evening dress.

"It is most good of you to come," he said, while he indicated a big armchair for his visitor to sit in—he did not offer to shake hands. "It was certainly my duty to have called upon you; my only apology for getting you to ascend here is that the subject I wish to converse with you upon is too serious for both of us to admit of interruptions."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Medlicott pompously, growing more surprised each moment. "And may I ask the nature of your trouble?"

Count Roumowski did not change his position by the mantelpiece, and he kept still as a bronze statue as he spoke in a courteous tone.

"It is not a trouble at all," he began gravely. "On the contrary, it is a great joy and honor for me. I will state the facts immediately: I understand that for a short while you have been engaged to be married to Miss Stella Rawson, the niece of the respected English clergyman, the Reverend Ebley—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Mr. Medlicott acidly, "but I do not see how my private affairs can interest you, sir—I cannot—"

But the host in turn interrupted him.

"If you will be so good as to listen patiently, you will find that this matter is of vital importance. May I proceed?"

Mr. Medlicott bowed; what more could he do? Count Roumowski went on:

"I understand that Miss Rawson never showed very strong affection for you, or great desire for this union, so

what I have to ask now is if you, as a gentleman, will release her from her promise to you and set her free?"

"Upon my word, sir, this is too much!" Mr. Medlicott exclaimed, starting to his feet. "By what authority do you say these preposterous things? You were only introduced to Miss Rawson and myself to-night. You must be mad!"

"No, I am quite sane—and I say them upon the best authority," Count Roumowski continued, "because I love Miss Rawson myself, and I am deeply honored by believing that in return she loves me—not you at all. Therefore, it is common sense to ask you to release her and let her be happy with the person she prefers—is it not so?"

Eustace Medlicott had grown white with anger and astonishment as he listened, and now broke in hotly, forgetful of his intoning voice, or anything but his outraged dignity:

"When have you had the opportunity to try and undermine the faith of my betrothed, may I ask? Supposing you are saying this seriously, and not as some ill-timed jest."

Count Roumowski lifted his eyebrows a little, and looked almost with pity at his adversary. "We are not talking in the heroic manner," he replied, unmoved by the other's taunt. "We are, I presume, two fairly intelligent men discussing this affair together. There has been no question of undermining. Miss Rawson and myself found we understood one another very soon after we first met. Surely you must realize, sir, that love cannot be commanded—it will not come, or go, at one's bidding. These ridiculous bonds of convention, holding to a promise given when the spirit to keep it is no longer there, can ruin people's lives."

Mr. Medlicott drew himself up. He was not quite so tall as the Russian, but of no mean height, and his intense, ascetic face, emaciated to extreme leanness, now reddened with passion, while the veins stood out upon his high, narrow forehead. He was always very irritable when crossed, and his obstinate nature was strongly combative.

"You forget, sir," he said angrily, "you are insulting my honor."

"Not in the least in the world; you do not understand the point," Count Roumovski returned calmly. "Listen for a minute, and I will explain. If Miss Rawson were already your wife, I should be, and you would have the right to try and kill me—did your calling permit of that satisfaction of gentlemen—because there is a psychological and physiological reason involved in that case, producing the instinct in man—which he is not, perhaps, conscious of—that he wishes to be sure his wife's legitimate offspring are his own. Out of this instinct civilization has built up the idea of a man's honor, which you can see has a basic principle of sense and justice."

Mr. Medlicott with difficulty restrained himself from interrupting, and the Russian went on:

"The situation of betrothed is altogether different. In it there have merely been promises exchanged, promises, for the most part, which no man or woman can honestly engage with any certainty to keep, because feeling toward the other is not within his or her control; both are promising upon a sentiment, not a reality."

"I totally disagree with you," Eustace Medlicott answered angrily. "When men and women make promises to one another they should have wills strong enough to keep them."

"For what sensible reason?" Count Roumovski asked. "In a case where the happiness of both is involved, and where no damage has been incurred by either—"

Mr. Medlicott clasped his hands convulsively, but he did not reply; so the Russian went on:

"Surely you must see that a woman should be free to marry—that is, to give herself and her power to become a mother—where she loves, not to be forced to bestow these sacred gifts when her spirit is unwilling, just because she has made the initial mistake of affiliating herself to a man—often through others' influence—whom she discovers afterward is distasteful to

her. Cannot you realize that it is wise for himself, as well as for her, that this man release her before a life of long misery begins for them both?"

Mr. Medlicott never analyzed reasons, and never listened to other people's logic, and if he had any of his own he was too angry to use it. He was simply conscious now that a foreigner had insulted him and appeared to have stolen the affections of his betrothed, and his sacred calling precluded all physical retaliation—which at the moment was the only kind that would have given him any satisfaction. He prepared to stalk furiously from the room after he should receive an answer to an all-important question.

"The whole thing is disgraceful," he said, "and I shall inform Miss Rawson's uncle and aunt of your highly insulting words to me that they may guard her from further importunity upon your part. But I should like to know, in fairness, how far you are stating you have been able to persuade my fiancée to agree to your view?"

"I am sorry you should have become so heated and angry," Count Roumovski returned, "because it stops all sensible discussion. I deeply regret having been forced to inflict pain upon you, but if you would give yourself time to think calmly you would see that, however unfortunate the fact may be for *you* of Miss Rawson's affections having become fixed on me, these things are no one's fault, and beyond human control. Miss Rawson has left the breaking off of her engagement to you in my hands, and has decided that she desires to marry me, as I desire to marry her, as soon as she is free."

"I refuse to listen to another word," Mr. Medlicott flashed; "and I warn you, sir, that I will give no such freedom at your bidding; on the contrary, I shall have my marriage with Miss Rawson solemnized immediately, and try—if there is a word of truth in your preposterous assertion that she loves you—to bring her back to a proper sense of her duty to me and to God, repressing her earthly longings by discipline and self-denial, the only true

methods for the saving of her soul. And I and her natural guardians, her uncle and aunt, will take care that you never see her again."

Count Roumovski raised his eyebrows once more, and prepared to light a cigar.

"It is a pity you will not discuss this peacefully, sir," he said, "or apparently even think about it yourself with common sense. If you would do so, you would begin by asking yourself what God gave certain human beings certain attributes for"—he blew a few whiffs of smoke—"whether to be wasted and crushed out by the intolerance of others, or whether to be tended and grow to the highest, as flowers grow with light and air and water."

"What has that got to do with the case?" Mr. Medlicott interrupted, tapping his foot uneasily.

"Everything," went on the Russian mildly. "You, I believe, are a priest, and therefore should be better able to expound your Deity's meaning than I, a layman; but you have evidently not the same point of view. Mine is always to look at the facts of a case denuded of prejudice—because the truth is the thing to aim at—"

"You would suggest that I am not aiming at the truth!" the clergyman interrupted, trembling now with anger, so that he fiercely grasped the back of a high chair. "Your words are preposterous, sir."

"Not at all," Count Roumovski continued. "Look frankly at things. You have just announced that you would constitute yourself the judge of what is for Miss Rawson's salvation."

"Leave her name out, I insist!" the other put in hotly.

"To be concrete, unfortunately, I cannot do so," the Russian said. "I must speak of this lady we are both interested in; pray try to listen to me calmly, sir, for we are here for the settling of a matter which concerns the happiness of our three lives."

"I do not admit for a moment that you have the right to speak at all," Mr. Medlicott returned. But his adversary went on quietly:

"You must have remarked that Miss Rawson possesses beauty of form, soft coloring, and a look of health and warmth and life. All these charms tend to create in man a passionate physical love; that is cause and effect. For the sake of the present argument, we will for the moment leave out all more important questions of the soul and things mental and spiritual. Well—who gave her these attributes? Did you or I—or even your parents consciously? Or did the Supreme Being, whom you call God, endow her so? Admitted that He did, have you, then, or any one else, the right to crush out the result of His endowment in a woman, crush out her joy of them, force her into a life where their possession is looked upon as a temptation? Seek to marry her—remember what marriage physically means—being certainly actuated to do so by their attraction—and yet believing that you sin each time you allow them to influence you?" Count Roumovski's level voice took on a note of deep emotion, and his blue eyes gleamed. "Why, the degradation is horrible to think of, sir, if you will face the truth. And this is the fate to which you would condemn this young and tender girl for your own selfishness, knowing she does not love you."

Eustace Medlicott walked up and down rapidly for a moment; he then picked up a book, and threw it aside again in his agitation. He was very pale now.

"I refuse to have the woman I have decided to marry snatched from me by any of your sophistries," he said breathlessly. "I am better able than you to save her soul, and she owes me honor and obedience. It is most unseemly to even mention the aspects you have done in a bond which is a sacrament of holy church, and should be only approached in a spiritual frame of mind, not a carnal one."

"You are talking pure nonsense, sir," returned Count Roumovski sternly. "If that were the case, the wording of your English marriage service would be different. First and foremost, marriage is a contract between two people to

live together in union of body, and to procreate children, which is the law of God and nature. Man added arrangement and endowment of property, and the church added spiritual sacrament. But God and nature invented the vital thing. If it were not so it would have been possible for the spiritually minded, of which company you infer yourself to be, to live with a woman on terms of brother and sister, and never let the senses speak at all. There would then have been no necessity for the ceremony of marriage for priests with your views."

Eustace Medlimott shook with passion and emotion as he answered furiously: "You would turn the question into one of whether a priest should marry or not. It is a question which has agitated me all my life, and which I have only lately been able to come to a conclusion upon. I refuse to let you disturb me in it."

"I had not thought of doing so," Count Roumovski returned tranquilly. "You and your views and your destiny do not interest me, I must own, except in so far as they interfere with myself and the woman I love. You have proved yourself to be just a warped atom of the great creation, incapable of anything but ignoble narrowness. You cannot even examine your own emotions honestly and probe their meaning, or you would realize no man should marry, be he priest or layman, if he looks upon the joys of physical love as base, and his succumbing to them a proof of the power of the beast in himself. Because he then lives under continual degradation of soul by acting against his conscience."

Mr. Medlicott was now silent, almost choking with perturbation. So Count Roumovski went on:

"The wise man faces the facts of nature, looks straight to find God's meaning in them, and then tries to exalt and ennable them to their loftiest good. He does not, in his puny impotence, quarrel with the all-powerful Creator and try to stamp out that with which He thought fit to endow human beings."

"Your words convey a flagrant denial

of original sin, and I cannot listen to such argument," Mr. Medlicott flashed, his anger now at white heat. "You would do away with a whole principle of the Christian religion."

"No, I would only do away with a faulty interpretation which man grafted upon it," Count Roumovski answered.

Then the two men glared straight into each other's eyes for a moment, and Eustace Medlicott quailed beneath the magnetic force of the Russian's blue eyes; he turned away abruptly. He was too intolerant of character, and too disturbed now, to permit himself to hear more of these reasonings. He could but resort to protest, and let his wrath rise to assist him.

"It cannot benefit either Miss Rawson or ourselves to continue this unseemly controversy over her," he said, in a raucous voice. "I have told you I will give no freedom upon your request, and I have warned you of my action. Now I shall go." And he took three steps toward the door.

But Count Roumovski's next words arrested him a moment. His tone was no longer one of suave, detached calmness, but sharp and decisive, and his bearing was instinct with strength and determination.

"Since we are coming to warnings," he said, "we drop the velvet glove. The courtesy to a lady conveyed in your words obliges me to use my own way without further consulting you for assisting her wishes. I will again thank you for coming up here, and will have the honor to wish you good night." With which he opened the door politely and bowed his visitor out.

And when he was alone Count Roumovski sat down by the open window, and puffed his cigar meditatively for some minutes, smiling quietly to himself as he mused:

"Poor, stupid fellow! If people could only be honest enough with themselves to have a sensible point of view! It is all so simple if they would get down to the reason of things without all this false sentiment. Of what use to chain the body of a woman to one man if her spirit is with another? Of

what use to talk of offended honor with high-sounding words when, if one were truthful, one would own it was offended vanity? Of what use for this narrow, foolish clergyman to protest and bombast and rave? Underneath, he is actuated by mostly human motives in his desire to marry my Stella. When will the world learn to be natural and see the truth? Love of the soul is the divine part of the business, but it cannot exist without love of the body. As well ask a man to live upon bread without water!"

Then he moved to his writing table, and composed rapidly a letter to his beloved, in which he recounted to her the result of the interview, and the threats of her late fiancé, and the humor in which he had quitted the room; and from that she might judge of what she must reasonably expect. He advised her, as he was unaware of how far the English authority of a guardian might go, to feign some fatigue, and keep her room next day, and on no account whatever to be persuaded to leave Rome or the hotel. He told her that in the morning he would endeavor to see her uncle and aunt, but if they refused this interview he would write and ask formally for her hand, and if his request were treated with scorn, then she must be prepared to slip away with him to the Excelsior Hotel, and be consigned to the care of the Princess Urazov, his sister, who would have arrived from Paris. The business part of the epistle over, he allowed himself half a page of love sentences, which caused Miss Rawson exquisite delight when she read them some moments later.

She had not gone to bed directly—she was too excited and full of new emotions to be thinking of sleep—and when she heard Ivan's gentle tap at her door she crept to it, and whispered, without opening it:

"Who is there?"

A low voice answered: "*Une lettre pour mademoiselle.*" And the epistle was slipped into the little box for letters on the door. She went back to her wide-open window, and looked out

on the darkness after she had read it. She saw there would be trouble ahead: She knew Eustace Medlicott's obstinate spirit very well, and also the rigid convention of Aunt Caroline; but to what lengths they would go she formulated no guess.

It all seemed so secure and happy and calm now, with such a man to lean upon as Sasha Roumovski. Nothing need ruffle or frighten her ever any more. And then she read the love sentences again, and thrilled and quivered there in the warm, soft night. Sasha Roumovski's influence over her had grown so strong that not a questioning speculation as to the step she meant to take any longer entered her head. She felt she knew at last what love's meaning truly was, and nothing else mattered in the world—which, indeed, was the truth!

Meanwhile, the Reverend Eustace Medlicott, burning with fury, had stalked to his room, and there tried to think of what he had better do. He feared it was too late to communicate with Canon and Mrs. Ebley; they would have retired to bed, and Stella also. Here his thoughts were brought up with violent suddenness. Was she quite safe? Heaven above!—and he turned quite cold—foreigners might be capable of any outrage. But presently he dismissed this fear; people always locked their doors in hotels, and Stella, though she had apparently shown herself sadly unworthy of his regard, was a thoroughly, well-brought-up young woman, and would not be likely to bandy words in the night with any young man. But on the morrow he would insist upon their all leaving the hotel and Rome itself. No more chances of her communicating with this hateful Russian count should be risked.

As the Ebley party had only arrived three days ago in the city, it was clearly impossible that the affair could have gone far; and as he had heard of their sight-seeing, and knew Mrs. Ebley would be extremely unlikely to allow Stella out of her sight in any case, he could not imagine how his fiancée and the Russian could have found a chance

to speak. And even a foreigner could not persuade a woman into this course of action in a half hour's talk at the embassy. The whole thing must be the ravings of a madman, nothing more, and Stella herself would be the first to explain that point on the morrow.

But even this comforting thought could not quite calm him. There remained disquieting recollections of certain forcible arguments he had been obliged to listen to against his will, which had hit some part of his inner consciousness, usually impregnably protected by his self-conceit. And it was an hour or two before he was able to drink his barley water and retire to rest, which he felt he badly needed after his long journey and uncomfortably exciting evening.

CHAPTER VI.

The sun was blazing gloriously next day; the whole air was full of freshness and spring and youth. An ideal one for lovers, and not at all the atmosphere for anger and strife. But these facts did not enter into the consideration of three of the people, at least, connected with our little comedy.

Eustace Medlicott woke more full of wrath than he had been the night before, and, the moment he was dressed, proceeded to make havoc with the peace of the Reverend Canon and Mrs. Ebley. He sent up an urgent summons that they would see him immediately. Having no sitting room, he suggested the reading room, which would be empty at this hour.

The Aunt Caroline had experienced some misgivings herself, at the embassy, about her niece's absence with the foreign count, who had risen to this distinctive appellation in her mind from "that dreadful man"; but she had felt it more prudent not to comment upon her apprehensions to her niece. Eustace evidently had discovered further cause of resentment, and feminine curiosity assisted her to dress with greater rapidity than usual.

The pair entered the room with grave

faces, and took two uncomfortable chairs.

The Reverend Mr. Medlicott remained standing, and soon, from his commanding position, let them hear his version of the hated foreigner's communications. They were duly horrified and surprised, and then Mrs. Ebley bridled a little—after all, it was the behavior of her own niece which asperion was being cast upon.

"I am certain, Eustace, the man must be mad; I assure you, Stella has not been for an instant absent from me, except yesterday morning she went to the Thermes' Museum with Martha, whom you know has proved by twenty-five years of faithful service that she can be completely trusted. Therefore the girl cannot have had any opportunity of conversing with this stranger until last night. It would be only fair to question her first."

"My wife is quite right," Canon Ebley agreed. "We should listen to no more until Stella is here to defend herself. Let us send a message for her to descend at once."

He went and rang the bell as he spoke, and the summons to Miss Rawson was dispatched; then the three, somewhat uncomfortably, tried to exchange platitudes upon indifferent subjects until the waiter returned.

Mademoiselle was very fatigued, and was not yet up. Such an unheard-of thing petrified them all with astonishment. Stella to be still in bed at half past nine in the morning! The child must be ill—or it was distinct rebellion. Mrs. Ebley prepared to go and investigate matters, when another waiter entered with a note for Canon Ebley, and stood aside to receive the answer.

"Dear, dear!" said that gentleman to his wife. "I have not my glasses with me. I came down in such a hurry. Will you read it to me?"

But Mrs. Ebley was in a like plight so they were obliged to enlist the services of Eustace Medlicott.

He knew the writing directly he glanced at it, and every nerve of his body stiffened with renewed anger.

And it is to be feared he said to himself: "It is from that cursed man!"

He read it aloud, and it was the briefest and most courteous note, asking for the honor of an interview at whatever time would be most agreeable to Canon Ebley. The nature of the business to be discussed at it was not stated.

"I strongly advise you not to see the scoundrel," Mr. Medlicott said vehemently. "It is far better that we should all leave Rome immediately, and avoid any chance of scandal."

"Before we can decide anything," Mrs. Ebley said decisively, "I must speak with my niece. If she is quite ignorant of this foreigner's ravings, then there will be no necessity to alter our trip; we can merely move to another hotel. The whole thing is most unpleasant and irritating, and has quite upset me."

Stella, upstairs in her cozy bed, had meanwhile received another note from her lover. Full of tenderness and encouragement, it made her feel as bold as a young lioness, and ready to brave any attack. That her aunt had not been to see why she was not dressed already was filling her with surprise, and after the waiter had brought the message she guessed the reason why.

A firm tap came at the door presently, and her Aunt Caroline's voice saying sternly: "It is I, Stella—please let me in at once."

Miss Rawson got out of bed, unlocked the door, and bounded back again; and a figure of dignified displeasure sailed into the room.

"Are you ill, my dear?" Mrs. Ebley asked, in a stern voice. "It is otherwise very strange that you should not be dressed at this hour; it is a quarter to ten o'clock."

"No, I am not exactly ill, Aunt Caroline," Stella answered gently; "but I was very tired, and as I was making up my mind what I should say in my letter to Eustace to break my engagement off, I preferred not to come down until I had done so."

The Aunt Caroline could not believe her ears. She was obliged to sit down —her emotion made her knees tremble.

It was true, then; something had been going on under her very eyes, and she had not perceived it; the deceit and perfidy of human nature had always been a shock to her.

"You wish to break your engagement, Stella?" she said, as soon as she could steady her voice. "But you cannot possibly do so scandalous a thing—and for what reason, pray?"

"I find I do not love Eustace," Stella answered calmly, although her heart now began to beat rapidly. "I know I never have loved him; it was only because I thought it would please you and Uncle Erasmus that I ever became engaged to him, and now that I know what love is—I mean, now that the time is getting near, I feel that I cannot go through with it."

"There is something underneath all this, Stella," Mrs. Ebley said icily. "You cannot deceive me. You have been led astray, girl. It is wiser to confess at once, and I will try to pardon you."

Stella's spirit rose; she raised her head proudly; then she remembered her lover's counsel to have no arguments whatsoever, and so she curbed her heated words, and continued gently:

"I have not been led astray, Aunt Caroline, and there is nothing to pardon. I am twenty-one years old now, and surely can judge for myself whether or no I wish to marry a man; and I have decided I do not intend to marry Eustace Medlicott; I almost feel I detest him."

Mrs. Ebley was petrified with anger and astonishment.

"I am sorry to tell you I cannot believe you, Stella," she said. "Your fiancé had a most unpleasant shock last night. The foreign person, Count Rounovski, who was presented to us at the embassy, insulted him greatly, and told him you had agreed to marry himself as soon as Eustace should set you free. I almost blush to repeat to you this shocking story, which we had considered the ravings of a madman, but the time has come when we must have some plain speaking."

"It has, indeed," Stella agreed, her wrath rising, then went on respectfully: "But I must refuse to discuss anything about Count Roumovski at present. Please believe me that I do not wish to annoy you, dear Aunt Caroline. I only wish to do what is right, and I know it is right to break off my engagement with Eustace Medlicott."

Mrs. Ebley felt her anger augmenting to boiling point; but nothing she could say had any effect upon her niece, who remained extremely respectful, and gently but perfectly firm. Mrs. Ebley could not get her to tell her anything about her acquaintance with this dreadful foreigner. She became silent after she had refused point-blank to discuss him. At last the baffled and exasperated older lady got up and fired her last shot.

"Words cannot express my pain and disgust at your conduct, Stella," she said. "Putting aside all the awful suspicions I have about this Russian, you will lay up for yourself a lifelong regret in outraging all decency by refusing to marry that good and pure young clergyman, Eustace Medlicott."

"I have done nothing wrong, Aunt Caroline; please do not go away so angry with me," Stella pleaded. "When Count Roumovski asks Uncle Erasmus' and your consent to his marrying me, then I will tell you everything about him, but now I do not wish to. Please forgive me for causing you pain. We shall all be very happy soon, and surely I have a right to my life like any other person."

Mrs. Ebley would not bandy further words; their points of view were too different.

"I regret that I am obliged to request you to keep your room and have no communication with any one whatever until I can consult with your uncle and Eustace as to what is the best thing to do with you. That we shall leave Rome immediately you may be prepared for."

Stella here burst into tears; she had an affection for her aunt, who had always been kind to her in a hard, cold way, and she was deeply grieved at

their estrangement; but there were forces in life which she knew now mattered more than any aunts in the world.

Mrs. Ebley did not relent at the sound of the sobbing, but left the room, closing the door firmly after her. And a few minutes afterward Martha was let in by the chambermaid, without knocking, and sat down grimly by the window, and began to knit.

Then Stella's tears turned to resentment. To be insulted so! To have a servant sent to watch her was more than she would bear! But as she turned in bed she felt her lover's note touch her, and like a magic wand a thrill of comfort rushed through her. After all, he would settle things for her; and meanwhile she would close her eyes and pretend to sleep. So, with her precious love letter clasped tight in her hand under the clothes, she turned her face to the wall and shut her eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

Meanwhile, Canon Ebley and the Reverend Eustace Medlicott were spending a very disagreeable time in the reading room. Relieved of Mrs. Ebley's presence, Eustace had recounted more fully the interview he had had with Sasha Roumovski the night before. He was not a very accurate person, and apt to color everything with his own prejudice, so Canon Ebley did not obtain a very clear idea of the Russian's arguments. They seemed to him to be very unorthodox and carnal and reprehensible from all points. But it was evident they were dealing with a clever and dangerous character, and Stella must be rescued from such a person's influence and married off to her lawful fiancé at once.

"We could have the ceremony here, Eustace, in three weeks' time, or we could go back to England immediately, for until our niece is your wife I am sure her aunt and myself will not feel easy about her."

"Nor I, either," Mr. Medlicott returned, and at that moment the Aunt Caroline entered the room, and gradually disclosed the awful truth she had

arrived at from Miss Rawson's admissions.

"That dreadful foreigner must be told at once we refuse to have any communication with him, and Stella shall be kept locked in her room until we can leave Rome," Mrs. Ebley said sternly. "I could not have believed my own sister's child could have behaved so disgracefully."

"Dear, dear!" said Canon Ebley. "But we must get at the facts of when she has been able to see this Russian. It is impossible that the present state of things could have arisen from merely last night at the embassy."

At this stage of the proceedings, it being a public room, Count Roumovski entered it serenely, and, coming toward the group, made a stiff bow to each in turn.

"I believe you have received my letter, sir," he said, addressing Canon Ebley, "but as I have had no reply I ventured to present myself without further delay——"

"We do not wish for any communication from you," Eustace Medlicott hastened to announce before either of the others could speak. "I have informed Canon and Mrs. Ebley of your disgraceful conduct, and that is sufficient. We shall discuss nothing further."

"I was not addressing you, sir," Count Roumovski returned mildly. "My business with you terminated last night." And he turned his shoulders to the irate junior chaplain, and looked Canon Ebley straight in the face. "I am here to ask for the hand of your niece, Miss Rawson, as she is now free from other engagements, and, with her full consent, I desire to make her my wife."

"Come, Erasmus," Mrs. Ebley said, with icy dignity, "let us go up to our apartment, and if this person annoys us further we can complain to the manager of the hotel." Then, with an annihilating glance, she took her husband's arm, and drew him toward the door.

"As you will, madame." And the Russian gentleman bowed with respect-

ful serenity. "It would have been more sensible to have taken my request otherwise, but it is, after all, quite immaterial. I will wish you a good day." And he bowed again as Canon Ebley and his outraged spouse sailed from the room, and, with an exclamation of suppressed fury, Eustace Medlicott followed in their wake.

Then Count Roumovski laughed softly to himself, and, sitting down at a writing table, wrote a letter to his beloved. His whole plan of life was simple and direct. He had done what he considered was necessary in the affair; he had behaved with perfect openness and honor in his demand, and if these people could not see the thing from a common-sense point of view they were no longer to be considered; he would take the law into his own hands.

When he had finished his note, he went straight up in the lift to the corridor where was Stella's room, and there saw in the distance her raging and discomfited late betrothed evidently keeping watch and ward. Count Roumovski did not hesitate a second; he advanced to the door, and knocked firmly on the panel, slipping his letter through the little slide for such things before Mr. Medlicott could bound forward and prevent him.

"A letter for you, mademoiselle, from me, Sasha Roumovski," he said, in French, in a loud enough voice for the occupant of the room to hear. And then he stood still for a second, as both men heard Stella jump from her bed and rush to the door to take the missive before Martha, from the place at the window, could intercept it.

"Do not dare to touch that, Martha!" they heard her voice say haughtily; and then she called out: "Sasha, I have it safe, and I will do exactly as you direct."

Count Roumovski looked at Eustace Medlicott, who stood as a spread eagle in front of the door, and then, smiling, went calmly on his way.

The Reverend Mr. Medlicott shook with burning rage. He was being made to look ridiculous, and he was abso-

lutely impotent to retaliate in any way. He would bring scandal upon them all if waiters and other guests saw him guarding Miss Rawson's actual door, and he could not sit outside like a valet. The whole thing was unspeakably maddening, and murderous thoughts flooded his brain.

"Give me that letter this minute, Stella!" he said through the keyhole, in an almost inarticulate voice, he was so shaken with passion. "Open the door at once, and let Martha hand it to me. You are disgracing us all."

"It is you who are doing that, Eustace," Stella said from beyond the panel, lifting the slide that her voice might be heard distinctly. "You have no authority over me at all. I told Aunt Caroline I did not intend to continue my engagement with you, but even if I had not decided to break it off this conduct of yours would now be sufficient reason. How dare you all treat me as though I were a naughty child, or insane?"

"Because you are both," Mr. Medlicott returned, "and must be controlled and compelled into a proper behavior."

Stella was silent; she would not be so undignified as to parley further. She got back into bed, taking not the slightest notice of the maid, and then proceeded to read her letter.

Her lover had explained in it the situation, and advised her to dress at once, and then, if menaced in any way, to ring the bell. Ivan would be waiting outside to obey her slightest orders and to warn his master if any fresh moves were made, so that when the waiter or chambermaid came in answer to her summons she might be sure of extra help at hand. Then she was to walk out, and down into the hall, where he—Sasha—would be watching for her and ready to take her to the Excelsior Hotel, where that same evening would arrive the Princess Urazov. "But if they do not molest you, dearest," he wrote, "do not leave your room until seven o'clock, because I would wish my sister to be in the hall, ready to receive you, that your family can see that I only desire to do everything right."

And as she finished reading, Stella got up and told Martha to prepare her things.

"I have no orders from Mrs. Ebley for that, Miss Stella," the woman answered sullenly. "I do wonder what has come over everybody? I never was in such an uncomfortable position in my life."

Stella made no answer, but proceeded to dress herself, and then sat down to read again the letters she had received in the last twenty-four hours.

If her family, who knew her, could treat her in this abominable way when she had committed no fault except the very human one of desiring to be the arbiter of her own fate, she surely owed no further obedience to them. So she waited calmly for a fresh turn of events.

Her luncheon was brought up on a tray by the waiter, and some for Martha also, and the two ate in silence until Stella suddenly burst into a merry peal of laughter; it was so grotesquely comic—a grown-up English girl, in these days, locked in her room with a dragon duenna jailer!

"Martha, isn't it too funny—the whole thing?" she said between her gurgles. "Can't you laugh, you old goose? And to think how sorry you will be you were so horrid when I am gone! Because, of course, you know, you cannot keep me once I make up my mind to go."

"Mrs. Ebley said I was to have no conversation with you, miss," Martha said glumly, at which Stella laughed afresh.

Meanwhile, Count Roumovski had made all arrangements at the Excelsior Hotel, and after lunch sat quietly in the hall, awaiting his beloved. Mrs. Ebley had felt too upset to go down to the restaurant, so the two clergymen were there alone, and glanced wrathfully at the imperturbable face of Count Roumovski, seated at his usual table, with his air of detached aloofness and perfect calm. They, on the contrary, were so boiling with rage that they knew not what they ate.

After lunch it had been decided that

the party should leave the Grand and take the five-o'clock train to Florence, and their preparations were made.

Mrs. Ebley had herself been laboriously packing, so as not to take Martha from her post, and orders were whispered to that faithful Abigail, through Stella's letter slide, to pack Miss Rawson's things at once.

Stella watched these preparations serenely, and gave Martha directions as to what to put on the top. Then, when all was finished, and she had donned her hat, she rang the electric bell for the waiter, and when he knocked at the door she calmly bade him enter, which, of course, he was able to do with his key; and she told him, in French, which Martha did not understand, to send the porters there immediately, and to have her luggage consigned to the care of the servant who would be waiting in the passage. This person would give orders for its destination. The waiter bowed obsequiously. Had he not been already heavily tipped by the intelligent Ivan, and instructed instantly to obey the orders of mademoiselle?

"It is much better I am before them," Stella thought to herself, while Martha looked on in rageful bafflement.

"The porters will come up and take the trunks outside, Martha," Miss Rawson said. "You can give them what orders aunt told you to."

Such was her supreme confidence in the methods of her lover that she felt sure once Ivan was apprized of the fact by the waiter that the trunks would be consigned to him, it would not matter what Martha said to the porters. So she calmly sat down by the window and folded her hands, while the elderly maid fumed with the uncertainty of what she ought to do. And in a few moments the men appeared, and smilingly seemed to understand the gestures and English orders of Martha to take the trunks to the door of Madame Ebley, No. 325, round the corner of the passage and on the opposite side.

They nodded their heads wisely, and carried the boxes out, shutting the door after them, and then there was silence

for a while, and Stella half dozed in her chair—it was so warm and peaceful by the window, and she had had so little sleep in the night.

An hour passed, and at four o'clock the Aunt Caroline appeared. Her face was grim. Had Stella been an outcast in deed and word, she could not have looked more disdainful.

"You must come down with me now, Stella," she said; "we are ready to go to the station. I will remain with you here until Martha gets her hat."

Stella rose to her feet, and before the astonished lady could speak more she had swiftly passed her and gained the door, which she threw open, and, like a fawn, rushed down the passage toward the staircase on the entrance side of the hotel; and by the time her slowly moving aunt had emerged from the room she had turned the corner and was out of sight.

Fortunately she met no one on the stairs except one astonished page, and arrived in the outer corridor breathless with excitement and emotion.

Count Roumovski saw her through the door of the hall, and hastened to meet her.

"There is not a moment to be lost," she said as he got to her side.

"Go to the place you went before, under the trees," he whispered hurriedly in return. "The automobile is there, and I will follow presently." So she went.

Her knees would hardly support her, she trembled so, until she was safe in the big blue motor, which moved off at once. For an awful moment a hideous sense of horror overcame her, making her cold. What lay in front of her? What new fate? And then joy and life came back. She was going to freedom and love—away from Exminster and dreary duties—away from Eustace Medlicott—forever! For, of course, her uncle and aunt would come round in time, and they could be happy again with her some day.

When Mrs. Ebley had collected her scattered senses and followed down the passage, only to find Stella out of sight, she was obliged to retrace her steps

and rejoin her husband and Mr. Medlicott, who were awaiting her at the lift on the other side—the restaurant end—which was the one they were accustomed to descend by.

"She ran away from me, Erasmus!" the agitated lady cried. "Passed me without a word, and I suppose she has gone down the stairs. If we hasten in the lift we shall catch her."

But as they frantically rang the bell and the lift boy did not come, Eustace Medlicott, with a most unsaintly exclamation, hastened off by that staircase, and arrived in the hall to see the hated Russian calmly smoking his cigarette and reading an English paper.

He advanced upon him, regardless of the numbers of people beginning to assemble for tea.

"What have you done with Miss Rawson?" he said furiously. "She has this moment run away from her aunt."

"I have nothing to converse with you about," Count Roumowski returned, with mild surprise. "And as I see it is four o'clock I must wish you a good day, as I have an appointment." With which he rose quietly, before the other could prevent him, and crossed the broad path of carpet which separates the groups of chairs, and there was seen to enter into earnest conversation with a Russian-looking individual who had just entered.

The Reverend Mr. Medlicott was nonplussed, and hurried into the front vestibule, where he made rapid inquiries of the hall porter.

Yes, the young lady, he believed, had walked out of the hotel not two minutes before. Monsieur would overtake her certainly if he hastened. And the frantic young man rushed from the door, through the porte-cochère, and so to the street; but all he saw in the far distance was a retreating, large blue automobile; and this conveyed, among all the rest of the traffic, no impression whatever.

To search for Stella was hopeless; the only thing to do was to return to the Ebleys, and with them go to the embassy. There they could, perhaps,

get advice and help how to communicate with the police.

But what an ignominious position for a bishop's junior chaplain to be placed in—a humiliation in every way.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Stella found the automobile drawing up at a strange hotel's door her tremors broke out afresh—until she saw the face of Ivan, who, with the porter, came forward to meet her, saying respectfully, in French, would mademoiselle be pleased to mount directly to the rooms reserved for the Princess Urazov? And soon, without any one questioning her, she found herself being taken up in the lift, and finally ushered into a charming sitting room full of flowers.

Here she sat down and trembled again. The wildest excitement filled her veins. Would Sasha never come! She could not sit still; she walked from bouquet to bouquet of roses and carnations, sniffing the scent, and at last subsided into a big armchair as the waiters brought in some tea.

He thought of everything for her, then—her lover. But, oh, why did he not come!

She had finished her tea, and had begun her restless pacing again, when, with a gentle tap, the door opened, and Count Roumowski appeared.

"Sasha!" she cried, and advanced toward him like a frightened child.

His usually calm blue eyes were blazing with some emotion which disturbed her greatly, she knew not why; and his voice seemed to have taken on a tone of extra deepness as he said:

"Stella, my little star! And so you are really here, and my own——"

He put his strong hands down and held onto the back of a chair, and, simple as she was, she knew very well that otherwise he would have taken her into his arms, which was where she was longing to be—if she had known.

"Yes, I have come," she whispered. "I have left them all—for you—— Oh, when will your sister be here?"

"Not until six o'clock, darling," he

answered, while his eyes melted upon her with passionate love. "There is an hour yet to wait. I had hoped you would not have been forced to leave your aunt's care until then."

"Oh, I am delighted to have come away!" Stella answered, regaining some of her composure. "I was shut into my room and watched by a servant—it was awful! But do—you know what has happened now—since I left? Are they tearing about after me, or what?"

Count Roumovski still held onto the back of the chair, and his voice was still deep as he said:

"I believe they have gone to your embassy in a band—and much good may they get there! You are of age, you see. Besides, I have taken care that no one at the Grand Hotel knows where we have gone, and it will take them quite an hour or two to telephone about and find out, and by that time my sister will have arrived, and we can defy them."

"Yes," said Stella; and then nervously: "Won't you have some tea?"

He sat down, still constrainedly, and clasped his hands; and, womanlike, when she saw his agitation, her own lessened, and she assumed command, while she asked almost archly if he took cream and sugar.

He liked neither, he said; and, with the air of a little hostess, she handed him the cup. Then she smiled softly, and stood quite near him.

He drew himself together, and his face looked almost stern as he took the tea, and over Stella there crept a chill, and the gay little speech that had been bubbling to her lips died there, and a silence fell upon them for a few moments. Then he put down his cup and crossed to the stiff sofa where she was, and sat down beside her.

"Sweetheart," he said, looking deeply into her eyes, "it is a colossal temptation, you know, to me to make love to you. But I am not going to permit myself that happiness yet. I want to tell you all about what we shall do presently, and see if it pleases you." He did not even take her hand, and

Stella felt rather aggrieved and wounded. "I propose that as soon as the formalities can be got through, and the wedding can take place, that we go straight to Paris, because you will want to get all kinds of clothes. And it will be such a delight to me to give you everything you wish for."

Stella smiled shyly. It seemed suddenly to bring the realities of things before her with keen force. He would have the right to give her everything in the world—this man whom she did not yet really know, but whom she felt she loved very much. She clasped her hands, and a thrill ran through her. What—what did it all mean? The idea of her marriage with Eustace Medlicott had always appeared as an ugly vision, an end to everything, a curtain which was yet drawn over a view which could only be all dusk and gray shadows, and which she would rather not contemplate. But now the thought of going away and beginning a new existence with Sasha Roumovski was something so glorious and delicious that she quivered with joy at any reference to it.

Her little movement and the clasping of her hands affected him profoundly; he, too, quivered, but with the stern effort to control himself. It was part of his code of honor. Not the slightest advantage must be taken of the situation while Stella was alone and unchaperoned, although the very fact of their propinquity and the knowledge of their solitude was extremely exciting to him, who knew the meaning of every emotion. He drew a little away from her, and said in a voice that sounded cold:

"I have seen the consul this afternoon. It will take three weeks, I am afraid, before we can be legally married here in Rome. It seems an eternity to me."

"Yes," agreed Stella, and suddenly looked down. She wished intensely that he would caress her a little—although she was unaware of the desire. She wondered vaguely—was it, then, very wicked to make love, since Sasha, too, like Eustace, seemed as if he were resisting something with all his strength—and unconsciously she pouted her red

under lip, and Count Roumovski moved convulsively.

"My sister's room is next to this," he said, "and yours is beyond. I have had only roses put there, because you are like a sweet June rose."

"Am I?" said Miss Rawson, and raised her head. She had grown extremely excited and disappointed, and she knew not what, only that she did not like this lover of hers to be sitting there constrained and aloof, talking in a stiff voice, unlike his usual easy grace. It was perfectly ridiculous to have run away with some one with whom she was passionately in love if he were going to remain as cold as ice.

She got up and took a rose from a vase, and fastened it in her dress. The whole movement and action had the unconscious coquetry of a woman's methods to gain her end. Totally unaccustomed as Stella was to all artifices, instinct was her teacher.

Sasha Roumovski rose suddenly.

"Come and sit here beside me again, heart of mine," he commanded, with imperious love, and indicated the stiff Louis XIV. sofa. "I must explain everything to you, it would seem."

Stella had never heard this tone in his voice before; it caused her strange delight, and she shyly took her seat at one end of the sofa, and then, as he flung himself down beside her, she looked up at him.

"What must you explain?" she asked.

"First, that I love you madly; that it is sickening temptation to be with you now every instant without holding you in my arms." And his voice trembled, while his blue eyes glowed. "That—I do not know how to resist the wild passion which is overcoming me—I want to kiss you so terribly—more than I have ever wanted anything in my life."

"We'll?" said Stella, with a quiver of exquisite joy. "And—" She had almost spoken her thought of "Why do you not do so, then?" but the burning passion she read in his made her drop her own eyes. This was too much

for him. He understood perfectly, and, with a little cry, he drew her to him, and his lips had almost touched her red, young, pouting lips when he suddenly controlled himself and put her from him.

"No, sweetheart," he said hoarsely. "You would never respect me any more if I took advantage of your tenderness now. As soon—as soon as I really may I will teach you every shade of love, and its meanings; I will kiss those lips and loosen that hair; I will suffocate you with caresses, and make you thrill as I shall thrill until we both forget everything in the intoxication of bliss." And he half closed his eyes, and his face grew pale again with suppressed emotion.

"Oh, I do not understand at all," Stella said, in a disappointed and perplexed voice. "Since we are going to be married, why would it be so very wrong for you to kiss me? I—I—" Her small, rueful face, with its sweet, childlike, irregular curves, looked almost pathetically comic, and Sasha Roumovski leaned forward and covered his eyes with his hands. And then he mastered himself, and laughed softly.

"Oh, you adorable one!" he said. "It is not wrong—not the least wrong. Only presently, when you do understand, you will realize how very much I loved you to-day."

But Stella was still pouting, and got up restlessly, and went to the window.

"What can they do when they get to the embassy?" she asked. "Could they really take me back if they found me by telephoning round?"

"I do not think so—if you are past twenty-one."

"I was twenty-one in April; I am not a bit afraid of them, but I do not want to have any row."

"When my sister has arrived you must write to your aunt, and tell where you are, and what are your intentions; then all will be finished."

"Oh, I wish she would come, don't you?" Stella said.

"More than I can say, darling," he answered fervently. "You will not, I

hope, find me so incomprehensible then."

He walked about the room once or twice, and at last paused close in front of her.

"Stella," he whispered, while his eyes blazed again, "I cannot bear it, little sweetheart, to stay all alone with you here. Will you forgive me if I leave you until Anastasia has arrived? Go and rest in your room, darling, and I will go to the station to meet her. Ivan will remain outside your door, and you will be quite safe."

But Stella put out her hands like a frightened baby.

"Oh, must you leave me?" she cried pettishly. "You are very cruel—you make me almost wish I had not come."

From having swum with love and passion, his eyes suddenly gave forth a flash of steel, and his voice was like ice as he answered:

"If that is so, mademoiselle, it is not too late. I would not exact any unwilling sacrifice. Shall I take you back again?"

And then Stella's childishness melted and fell from her, and she became a real woman as she looked into his stern face.

"No," she said, "I will not go back; I am sorry I was so uncontrolled, but I am nervous, and I do not know exactly what I am—Sasha—please take care of me!" And she held out her hands with a piteous gesture of asking for his protection, and, moved beyond all power of further control, he folded her in his arms.

"My darling, my darling!" he murmured, frantically kissing her hair. But his iron will reasserted itself in a few seconds, and, while he still held her, he said with more calm:

"Little star, you must never speak to me like that again—as you did just now, I mean. It was unreasonable and not kind—if you but knew. And I have a very arrogant temper, I fear, although I am nearly master of it, and shall be quite in time, I hope. We might have parted then, and spoiled both our lives. Won't you believe me that I love—I adore—you?" he went on tenderly. "I

am madly longing to be for you the most passionate lover a woman ever had. It is only for your sake and for honor and our future happiness that I restrain myself now. You see, I am not an Englishman, who can accept half measures. Do not make it impossible for me, sweet love!"

His voice was almost a sob in its deep notes of pleading, and Stella was touched.

"Oh, you are so dear and great!" she answered fondly. "I am perhaps very wicked to have tempted you—if it would be wrong for you to kiss me, which I cannot understand. It is—oh, it is because I love you like that, too!"

And at this ingenuous admission passion nearly overcame him again, and he held her so tightly it seemed as if he must crush out her very breath. Then he put her from him, and walked toward the door.

"I dare not stay another second," he said, in a strangled voice. "Ivan will guard your room, and my sister will come to you soon. Do as I tell you, beloved one, and then all will be well."

With which he opened the door and left her standing by the sofa, quivering with a strange joy and perplexity—and some other wild emotion of which she had not dreamed.

CHAPTER IX.

It seemed an endless time, the hour that she waited in her room, and then a knock came at the door, and Ivan's voice saying his master desired her presence in the sitting room at once, and she hurriedly went there, to find Count Rounovski standing by the mantelpiece, looking rather grave.

"Stella," he said, "there has been an accident to the train my sister was to have arrived by; it is not serious, but she cannot be here now until the early morning perhaps, unless I send the automobile to Viterbo for her. The line is blocked by a broken-down goods train which caused the disaster." He paused a moment, and Stella said "Well?" rather anxiously.

"It will be impossible for us to remain here," he continued, "because it may be that your relations, aided by the embassy, will have traced us before then; and if they should come upon us alone together nothing that I could say or prove could keep the situation from looking compromising." He now spoke with his old calm, and Stella felt her confidence reviving; he would certainly arrange what was best for them.

"What must we do, then?" she asked gently, while she put her hand on the sleeve of his coat.

"I will wrap you up in the fur cloak, darling," he said, "and you must come in the automobile with me to meet Anastasia. Your family must not find you again until you are in my sister's company. We ought to start at once."

It spoke eloquently for the impression which he had been able to create in Stella's imagination of his integrity and reliability, for the thought never entered her brain that it was a most unusual and even hazardous undertaking to start out into the night, in a foreign land, with a stranger she had not yet known for a week. But that was the remarkable thing about his personality; it conveyed always an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

It was not long before Miss Rawson was ready wrapped in the long gray cloak she had worn before, and with the veil tied over her hat, and was descending in the lift alone with Ivan, her lover having gone on by the stairs.

Their departure was managed with intelligence, Stella and the servant simply walking out of the hotel and down the street to where the car waited, and then presently Count Roumovski joined them, and they started.

"Ivan will remain behind to answer any questions if the reverend clergymen and your aunt do come," he said, when they were seated in the car in the setting sunlight. "And now, sweetheart, we can enjoy our drive."

Stella felt deliciously excited, all the exultation of adventure thrilling her, and the joy of her lover's presence. She cared not where they were going; it was all heaven.

"We shall stop at a little restaurant for some dinner," he said. "It will be rather bad, but we must not mind. It would not have been wise to risk any well-known place." And soon they drew up at a small café on the outskirts of Rome, where there were a few people already seated at little tables under the trees. They were all Italians, and took no notice of the Russian and his lady.

It was the greatest amusement to them both, this primitive place, and to be all alone, ordering their first meal together; and Sasha Roumovski exerted himself to charm and please her. He had recovered complete mastery of himself, it would seem, and his manner, while tenderly devoted, had an air of proprietorship which affected Stella exceedingly.

They spent an enchanting half hour, as gay as two children, with all the exquisite undercurrent of love in their talk; and then they got into the motor again.

"Let us have it open," Count Roumovski said. "The evening drive will be divine."

And Stella gladly agreed.

The road to Viterbo is far from good—one of those splendid routes which lead from Rome which ought to be so perfect, and in reality are a mass of ruts and pitfalls for the unwary. The jolting of the car constantly threw Stella almost into her lover's arms, who was sitting as aloof as possible. He had gradually become nearly silent, and sat there holding her hand under the rug, using the whole of his strong will to suppress his rising emotion.

The beautiful colors of the lights of evening over the Campagna, the sense of the springtime, and the knowledge that they were alone together, and that she belonged to him, heart and body and soul, was madly intoxicating as they rushed through the air. He dared not let himself caress her gently, which he might have permitted himself to do, and he held her little hand so tightly it was almost pain to her.

Thus eventually they reached Viterbo, and drew up at the station door.

when Count Roumovski seemed to have regained his usual calm as he helped her out with tender solicitude. The passengers, they learned, were still in the train, half a mile up the line, waiting until it was cleared to go on to Rome.

At last, after generous greasing of palms, permission was given for Count Roumovski to walk on and find his sister. And Stella was put back into the motor to await their coming.

Her heart began to beat violently. What would she be like, this future sister-in-law? She must be very fond of Sasha to have come from Paris at a moment's notice like this to do his bidding. It seemed a long time before she heard voices, and saw in the dim light two figures advancing from the station entrance; and then Count Roumovski opened the door of the automobile, and Stella started forward to get out.

"Anastasia, this is my Stella," he said, in his deep voice. "You cannot see her plainly, but I tell you she is the sweetest little lady in the world, and you are to hasten to love one another as I love you both."

Then in the half dark Stella stepped down, and found herself embraced by a tall woman, while a voice as deep for a feminine one as Count Roumovski's was for a man whispered kind, nice things in the fluent English which brother and sister both used. And a feeling of warmth and security and happiness came over the poor child, to be in a haven of rest at last.

"Now we shall all pack in and get to Rome before dawn," the princess said. "Sasha assures me the automobile will be faster than the train."

So it was arranged, and, with Stella between them, the two Russians sat in the commodious back seat; and this time Count Roumovski allowed himself to encircle his beloved with his arm—and very often surreptitiously kissed her little ear and that delicious little curl of hair in her neck. She had taken off her hat that its brim might not hit the princess, and had only the soft veil wound round her head, which

loosened itself conveniently. This drive back to Rome was a time of pure enchantment to them both. And when the first streaks of dawn were coloring the sky they arrived at the door of the Ex-celsior Hotel, where Ivan had supper ordered and awaiting them.

The princess proved to be a handsome woman when they got into the light, with the same short face and wide eyes as her brother. Stella and she made immediate friends, and before they parted to try and sleep the princess said:

"Stella, that my brother loves you proves that you must be a very dear girl; that is what made me come from Paris at his instantaneous bidding; he is the most splendid character in the world—only don't cross his wishes. You will find it is no use, for one thing." And she laughed her deep laugh. "He always knows best."

"I am sure he does," said Stella shyly. "I felt that at once, and so I did not hesitate."

Next morning, when the three were seated at a merry early breakfast in the sitting room, discussing what should be said in Stella's letter to her Aunt Caroline, a loud knock came at the door, and, without waiting for a response, Canon Ebley and Stella's cousin, Mr. Deanwood, entered the room.

The princess rose with dignity, draping her silk morning wrapper round her like a statue, and Stella stepped forward with outstretched hand.

"Oh, Uncle Erasmus!" she said gayly before any of the party could speak. "I am so glad to see you! I was just going to write to Aunt Caroline to tell her where I am, quite safe, in case she was worried about me. Let me introduce you to my future sister-in-law, Princess Urazov, with whom I am staying. My fiancé, Count Roumovski, you have met before."

Afterward she often wondered how this emancipated spirit of daring had ever come to her. But she felt so joyous, so full of love and happiness, that it seemed that she could not be afraid or annoyed with any one in the world.

"Stella, you are a shameless girl!"

Canon Ebley retorted, in a horrified voice. "I refuse to admit that you are engaged to this gentleman. Your whole conduct has been a scandalous series of deceptions, and you must be ready to return at once with your aunt and your affianced husband. They are following us here now."

Then Stella used a weapon that she had more than once found effectual with her uncle. She flung herself into his arms, and clasped him round the neck. He was a short, portly man, and from this position she began to cajole him—while Count Roumovski looked on with amused calm, and his sister, following his lead, remained unmoved also.

Mr. Deanwood was the only restless person. He felt thoroughly uncomfortable, and bored to death. He hated having been dragged into this family quarrel, and secretly sympathized with his cousin in her revolt at the thought of being Eustace Medicott's wife.

"Oh, dear Uncle Erasmus!" Stella purred from the highly perturbed clergyman's neck, where she was burrowing her head, rubbing her peachlike cheek against his whiskered cheek. "Don't say those dreadful things! I have not deceived anybody; I have known Count Roumovski since the day after we came to Rome, and—and—I love him very much—and you know I always thought Eustace a bore—and you must agree it is wicked to marry and not to love—so it must be good to—oh, well, to marry the person you do love. What have you to say against it?"

Canon Ebley tried to unclasp her arms from round his neck. He was terribly upset. To be sure, the girl was very dear to him, and had always been so sweet a niece—a truthful, obedient child from early infancy. Caroline had, perhaps, been a little hard; he had better hear the facts.

"Dear me—dear me!" he blurted out. "Well, well, tell me everything about the case, and, though I cannot consent to anything, I must do you the justice of hearing your side."

"Won't you sit down, then, sir?"

Princess Urazov said, "and let my brother and your niece tell you their story? Mr. Deanwood, we met in Budapest two years ago." And she turned to the young man, and indicated that he should join her in the far window embrasure, which he did with alacrity, and from there they heard, interpolated in their personal conversation, scraps of the arguments going on between the three.

Stella, assisted by her lover, told of her first talk and her drive, and their rapidly ripening affection for each other, and the girl looked so happy and so pleading. Then Count Roumovski took up the thread. He explained his position, and how his view of life had always been direct in its endeavor to see the truth and the meaning of things, and how to him love was the only possible reason in ethical morality for any marriage between two people.

"It is merely a great degradation otherwise, sir," he said earnestly.

But here Canon Ebley was heard to protest that he could not understand a love which had sprung into being in the space of three days, and he felt very suspicious of its durability.

"Oh, Uncle Erasmus, how can you say that!" Stella interrupted him. "Why, you have often said that you yourself fell in love with Aunt Caroline from the moment your eye lighted upon her in church—in church, remember, you old darling." And she nestled up against his shoulder again. Caresses like these she was always obliged to suppress in her austere aunt's presence; they were only to be indulged in upon great occasions, and to gain an important end, she knew. So the rogue smiled archly as she went on: "You could hardly wait until you were introduced at the garden party next day—and Aunt Caroline said you proposed to her before the end of the week!"

"Come, come!" the cornered uncle growled, bridling, but a smile grew in his kindly eyes.

"There!" exclaimed Miss Rawson triumphantly. "You cannot have another thing to say except that you consent and wish us happiness."

"It is true, you are of age, Stella," Canon Ebley allowed, "and if you like to take the law into your own hands we cannot legally prevent you—as I have tried to explain this morning to your aunt and Eustace—but it is all very shocking and unusual—and very disturbing. You must remember Count Roumovski is a foreigner, and we English people are prejudiced. I—fear for your happiness, my dear child."

"You do not pay me a high compliment, sir," Count Roumovski said, but without resentment. "Time, however, will prove whether I can take care of your niece or no. Do you feel any fear for yourself, Stella?"

"Not in the least," Miss Rawson said, and they clasped fond hands. "I would go away with you, Sasha, to the ends of the earth now, at once, and never ask you a single question. And I should certainly die if I were forced to go back to Eustace Medlicott."

"Then I suppose there is nothing more to be said," Canon Ebley stammered, upon which Stella again flung herself into his arms.

"Indeed, sir, I give you my word that you will not regret this decision," Count Roumovski said gravely. "I believe your niece and I were made for one another."

"We will hope so," returned Canon Ebley, who could no longer keep up a stern resistance in the face of perfectly logical arguments and a witch of a girl purring over him and patting his cheek. He could have given in with a fair grace but for the awful knowledge that his stern spouse and the irate late fiancé would arrive at any moment and reproach him for his want of strength.

At this juncture of the affair Princess Urazov came forward, and said, with a gracious smile:

"Now, I think you and I should agree with one another, sir. I had just as great cause for surprise as you had at the news of my brother's engagement to your niece, but I know and love him so well that I did not question the wisdom of his choice. And as you know and love your niece, can we not agree to try and make them happy together by

giving them our blessing? After all, it is no crime for two young people to love one another!" And she put out her hand, which Canon Ebley, who was, after all, longing for peace, was obliged to take. Then, with a charm and dignity that he was forced to admire, she drew him to the pair, and placed his hand on their clasped hands, and her own over it.

"See," she said, "Sasha and Stella, we both wish you all happiness and joy—is it not so?"

And Canon Ebley was constrained to murmur "Yes."

At this instant the door was opened violently, and the Aunt Caroline, followed by the Reverend Eustace Medlicott, burst into the room, brushing aside the frightened waiter who would have prevented them; then they stopped dead short, petrified with astonishment, and before she could prevent herself Stella had pealed a silvery laugh, while she rushed forward and affectionately kissed her aunt.

"Dear Aunt Caroline!" she said. "Uncle Erasmus understands quite, and has given us his blessing, so won't you, too?"

But Mrs. Ebley was made of sterner stuff. She was horribly shocked; her feelings had been bruised in their tenderest parts; the laws of convention had been ruthlessly broken by her niece, and forgiveness was not for her.

She drew herself up with disgusted hauteur, while the Reverend Mr. Medlicott stood there glaring at the party, too speechless with humiliation and pain to utter a word.

"Erasmus," Mrs. Ebley said, with scathing contempt, "I do not know how you have let yourself countenance this disgraceful scene, but I shall not do so, and if my niece still persists in bringing shame upon us all I must beg you to conduct me back to our hotel. I wash my hands of her, and shall no longer own her as my sister's child. Come!"

At this Stella gave a pitiful little cry, and turned tender, beseeching eyes to her lover, and the sound of her voice

touched that chord which was fine in Eustace Medlicott's heart. He seemed suddenly to see things as they were, and to realize that love had, indeed, come to his betrothed—though not for him—so he rose above the pain this conviction caused him, and let justice have sway.

He strode forward and joined the group.

"You must not say that, Mrs. Ebley," he said. "Since your husband seems satisfied, there must have been some proper explanations made. You should hear them first. I, for my part, wish to state now in the presence of every one that if Miss Rawson can assure me she has made this choice of her own free will, and because she loves this gentleman"—here there was a break in the tones—"I can have nothing further to say, and will give her back her freedom and make my retreat."

"Oh, Eustace, thank you!" said Stella gratefully, holding out her hand. "I knew I could eventually count upon your goodness. I do, indeed, love Count Roumovski, and why should not we all be happy together? You will

feel with me, I am sure, that our engagement was always a mistake, and now won't you be friends?"

She still held out a timid hand, and Mr. Medlicott took it at last, and, wringing it silently, turned and drew toward the door, making his exit.

Silence fell upon the company until he had gone, and then Count Roumovski whispered in his harassed little fiancée's ear:

"Never mind his point of view, darling; yonder goes an English gentleman, and since I have gained my star and he has lost his, he has my deepest sympathy."

Then every one seemed to talk at once, and the Princess Urazov at last appeared to be in some degree appeasing Mrs. Ebley.

There is very little more to tell of this comedy of a spring holiday in Rome. It ended with a quiet wedding, and two young people going off together in the blue automobile.

And when Count Roumovski clasped his newly made bride in his arms he whispered tenderly:

"At last, sweetheart!"



THE WINTER PAN

THEY told me Pan lay dead; they did not know
That mid the pine-swept shadows of the hill
That slanted blue across the drifted snow,
I heard his reed-wrought pipes faint fluting still.

They did not guess that through the sunset pale
That shot with streamered green the winter sky,
I followed far a dim hoof-printed trail,
And stumbled on his hemlock lair close by.

Where, holly crowned, amid the frost-starred boughs
Pan sat within the fading sunset light,
While pointed-eared beneath the hemlock browse,
The winter hares soft-passed like shadows white.

They told me Pan lay dead, that heedless throng,
Though all the while adown the sleigh-marked street,
Flute clear there breathed his echoed Winter Song
To linger near in pine-stirred cadence sweet.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.



SEVEN FRIDAYS

MARIE VAN VORST

MISS MAITLAND was discouraged. Humanity discouraged her, life discouraged her, she was almost discouraged with heaven—what she knew about it. When one has worked cheerfully among the poor for ten years, one may be expected, one may be excused for a momentary hiatus in the exaltation!

This hiatus lasted all day, beginning in Celia's room before her mirror. It was her birthday. She was thirty years old. Not a popular age for a heroine. One does not see pictures of women of thirty printed on the covers of ten-cent magazines. Yet Miss Maitland had read in an article the statement that "more men killed themselves for women of thirty than for any other age!"—This did not console her. Her depression continued throughout breakfast, when she opened her mail to learn that the owner of the tenement block, where her kind footsteps had worn the stairs bare, refused to clean up the filth and rubbish—refused everything except to grow rich.

Her correspondence was a continuous wail, as envelope after envelope revealed to her the demands of the poor. "And yet," she thought to herself, "aren't we commanded by Heaven to ask?"

Her man of affairs warned her that she was imperiling her capital by her lavish generosity, and urged her to "practice economy."

"So many practice it from necessity,"

she thought, and recalled her tenements, and the family of eight living on fifty cents a day, and wondered what *their* economies would be!

Before she started out on her afternoon's round of occupation, she decided that she was very blue—simply because she was a woman, and alone in the world, and humanity was too big to embrace her; she was lost in the arms of the mass.

Unless one is born a saint, and, at sixteen years of age, can shed blood that turns to lilies, it takes till past middle life to win a halo! "It seems too ridiculous," she thought, "to be too young, at thirty, for anything, but I am too young for sainthood!"

She made a few calls—she had never been an anchorite—and at three o'clock started for East Eightieth Street, where her tenements were. Although dressed in the plainest of clothes, there was something about Celia Maitland that made the people with her look a bit less distinguished.

Her glass informed her that she had not a gray hair in her head, not a wrinkle on her face, that her lips were red, and her eyes charming; yet she was alone. She was in a very bad mood to-day, as she went forth "to feed her lambs," and she wondered what all the "treasures of Heaven" could give to her to make up for the pleasures she was evidently losing in life.

To-day her tenements appeared to be a honeycomb of failures. She could not give all her goods to feed the poor,

though she would have liked to have done so. She had already seriously jeopardized her capital. She might mitigate suffering. She had no doubt been a consoler, but no soul had been saved because of her passing.

If she might have transformed *one* single existence, solved one problem—if this had been the fact—she felt that the Sodom before her would have been spared.

With a better front than its interior revealed, the eight-floor tenement leered out on Second Avenue with sardonic eyes. Miss Maitland visited only four floors. She went in reluctantly to-day, but did not get farther than the first floor. The door of the room opposite the stairs was open, and before the table sat one of her failures.

As Celia entered the room, the old woman quickly threw a dish cloth over an object not intended for the visitor's vision.

"It's *yerself*, shure!" The beatific smile with which the old woman welcomed Celia was forced for politeness' sake.

"It's the Mulhaleys will tell ye I was speakin' kind of ye to-day."

Miss Maitland sat down without hesitation, and laid her hand upon the table; it was spotless. Everything in the room was spotless, the small bed covered with a hand-pieced quilt, the windowpanes with small, decent curtains.

Bridgit Moreen was as bright and span as if she had been a shilling coined this very year, and not of the coinage of 1850. She wore no cap; her hair was soft and neat about her face; her features small, showing the imprint, never lost, of real beauty. Her old mouth had once been a perfect bow; in her cheeks a little pink glowed. On the palms and fingers of her hands the marks of forty years of toil had set their disfigurement. They had once been comely hands that a young man in love had kissed many times.

"It's God's truth, the springtime is sheddin' round ye, miss. It's a new hat and frock ye've got on, entirely. The mornin' breeze came up the stairs with

ye. It's good luck at all I set the door open."

"Bridgit," said the Anglo-Saxon mildly, "what have you got under that towel?"

"To think I amn't tidier than the sluts in taverns, miss!" Under Celia's eyes, she whisked the cloth and what it covered off the table. "A clout as should be in the wash! Will I make ye a cup of tay, dear—are ye weary comin' up the stairs?"

"Only one flight, Bridgit, and these are my old clothes."

The old woman stood in front of Celia.

"I'm thinkin' that the spring's in yer self. Glory be! but I smell the vi'lets as if they were growin' in Kerry." She turned to her spotless cupboard. "I'm thinkin' ye'll take some tay?"

"No," said Miss Maitland firmly. "Sit down, Bridgit."

Celia Maitland drew off her gloves, as she always did when she slummed. She wanted nothing between her hands and the hands she touched.

"Bridgit, *won't* you give up your glass of beer?"

Bridgit smiled.

"Me glass of beer—Glory be!"

As Celia sat before the old creature, it seemed to her of a sudden as if she must have this soul, this one victory.

Just this one soul! There was an embarrassment between the two women, and the Irishwoman's eyes fell.

"Glory be to God, there's not much pleasure left to me for me sixty years." Before Celia could reply to this, Bridgit, with the quickness of her race, said: "Is it any leisure hours in yer prayers ye'll be havin', darlint?"

"Leisure *hours* in my prayers!" repeated Miss Maitland vaguely, and realized at the same time how few hours she spent in prayer.

"I'm thinkin' ye might take off a few Fridays for me. I'm sure the Lord would love to hear the prayers of a sweet lady like *yerself*."

"A few Fridays, Bridgit!"

"Darlint," said the old creature solemnly, "haven't I been prayin' forty years for one sole thing?"

"For what, Bridgit?"

"That's tellin'," replied the old woman shrewdly. "Did ye ever have an answer to prayer?" The Irish-woman dropped her voice as she asked this.

Had she?

Miss Maitland wondered, but did not think it necessary to tell the old woman that she had not prayed for a long time.

"It's little that's remained with me but faith," said the Absolute Failure. "Wan by wan, as though He couldn't do without them, the Lord took everythin' but that from me."

"Have you," Miss Maitland asked her, "have you ever had an answer to prayer?"

"Not yet, dear."

"What have certain Fridays to do with it?"

"Glory be to God! Amn't there seven days in the Passion, wasn't He cruelly killed on a Friday?"

"Well, Bridgit?"

"It's afther bein' a holy length of time, I'm thinkin'."

"And your prayer has not been answered for forty years?"

The old woman's bright face fell.

"I'm thinkin' I amn't good enough, miss."

The humility and resignation in the old voice touched Miss Maitland. She saw suddenly a rift in the melancholy day; a light seemed to shift and fall through her vision. She had taken her seat in this tenement room in a hopeless mood, the curse of spiritual barrenness was upon her. Now her face lifted.

"It's prayin' for one sole thing for forty years, shure, that makes me think I amn't good enough; else I would have had it whiles since."

"Forty years," mused Miss Maitland again. The old woman's face altered. Celia had always seen it brave and gay. Now it grew weary, became the face of a watcher, wearing the unmistakable look that is on the faces of watchers who, till the end, strain their vision for one desired thing. Bridgit Moreen seemed to stand upon a tower and peer forth out and over forty years.

Miss Maitland mused.

"Forty years ago," said Bridgit softly, "I set fut in this countrh. I had it in me head that Ameriky was a different sort of place. I seen it like a fine garden, with golden sovereigns lyin' under the trees."

Bridgit drew a chair from its place by the wall and sat down, her hands meekly folded in her lap. On the hands of the toilers there are always marks that recall the crucifixion—the stigmata of labor.

"I found a bit of work to do immediately. Glory be to God, I've found it ever since."

This was one of Miss Maitland's failures. She had failed to make Bridgit renounce her daily glass of beer. Miss Maitland believed it was a blot upon her fine, old age.

"I was thinkin', the days gone by, shure, it's herself will take the burthen for seven Fridays!"

"What do you want me to do, Bridgit?"

"Amn't I afther tellin' how long and short, dear?"

"You want me to pray for seven Fridays?"

"That's it, glory be to God!"

"What shall I pray for?"

"Isn't that just like a woman, now?" said the old creature with a laugh, "to think she must be knowin' it all."

"But how can I pray without knowing what you want?"

Bridgit leaned forward impressively. "He knows, don't He?"

Miss Maitland smiled, rose, and put out her gracious white hand.

"I shall pray for seven Fridays, Bridgit, that your heart's desire shall be fulfilled."

"How did ye guess it, dear?"

"Guess what?"

"That it should be my heart's desire."

"By your face, Bridgit."

Bridgit quickly put her hand up to her cheek, and repeated: "Glory be to God!"

As Celia took her leave, deciding that she would make no other visits in the honeycomb that day, Bridgit Moreen said seriously, and with a sternness as

if she were imposing a renunciation upon herself:

"I'll not take a glass of beer the while."

"For seven Fridays!" exclaimed Miss Maitland, with delight.

"For seven wakes entirely," said the old woman. "My face might be tellin' some secrets on me, miss. I'll take no more."

That was of a Monday, as Bridgit Moreen would have said; poor, hard-worked, tempted, silver-haired, sweet-faced Bridgit Moreen, Celia thought of her with tenderness. Then she forgot her for a week. That week had its charm. Monday night Miss Maitland dined out. It was a worldly affair—a little dinner of forty people who were invited to meet a lion—an English explorer, Lord Romney Farrell. The lion roared to please the forty, who, in a corner of the music room, listened to Miss Maitland. She played divinely, and Lord Farrell listened as some people know how to listen—divinely. Afterward she talked to him.

That night, in her dressing room, she sat and dreamed. Without, the April night was mellowing into a warm day, and the dandelions were pushing upward in Central Park. Bridgit had said to her once: "Wan can hear the flowers fairly grow in Kerry, it's so solemn still."

Miss Maitland looked back on what a long day it had been since morning. It seemed five years. She felt five years younger.

Life no longer discouraged her. She felt discouraged neither with heaven nor with earth. She felt that all the souls of Sodom would be saved. She smiled gently as she thought of Bridgit Moreen. From then on, she thought only of Lord Farrell, and what he had said to her when she had finished playing.

There were eligible men in New York who had said things much more to the point, but no one had said anything to her sufficiently convincing to induce her to give up her liberty. Lord Farrell was slightly over forty. He had climbed the Mountain of the Moon, he had seen

vast distances, and had been with Nan-sen to the pole. Miss Maitland did not think of these things. It was not the lion that made her thoughtful.

On Friday Miss Maitland found herself one of a house party at the weekend at Westbury. At the end of the day she found herself one of a party of two on the country road—the other was Lord Farrell. There were between them the common memories of several dinner parties, and several tête-à-têtes. They rode together all the afternoon in the fresh air. The color came into her cheeks. A touch seemed to have been given to the door of the world, and it opened the right way. Through the widening crack, she looked into what promised to be—paradise!

That very evening, as he bade her good night in the big hall before going upstairs, Lord Farrell said: "I'm going to San Francisco to-morrow," and she had hardly been able to bid him good-by.

"You are going to be lionized in the West?"

"I am going on a private errand." Celia had found her self-possession. "I am going farther—to Japan, perhaps—then back here—then home." And, before half a dozen other people, they had bidden each other a conventional good night and good-by.

She sat reading until midnight, unwilling to take her eyes from the pages of the book. At last she laid her book down and glanced at the calendar on her dressing table. It marked in black letters "Friday." This had been an important day to her. But there seemed to be a haunting persistence in the big, black word FRIDAY. She suddenly remembered Bridgit Moreen, and her promise. Poor Bridgit Moreen, one of three hundred in a tenement house, the scrubwoman, the charwoman, with her hard-worked, disfigured hands, and her rich brogue! Bridgit had prayed with faith for forty years, and at the end had been obliged to give over her burden to younger life. Where would she be after forty years herself? How much of faith or life would persist in her? Bridgit Moreen, patient, toiling,

seemed a child to her, as she thought how small a spot on the sun of the old creature's character did the taking of a few glasses of beer seem.

What was it Bridgit had prayed for forty years? What of any value could continue to have value for forty years? Could it be a fortune? What would Bridgit Moreen want with a fortune? Every one she had ever loved must have died long ago. What could Bridgit Moreen have to do with love?

And, thinking of this, Celia Maitland meditated and dreamed, her hands clasped over her book.

Then she rose and made her preparations for the night. Leaning her head forward on her hands, she prayed. She prayed for Bridgit Moreen's heart's desire—that it should be fulfilled.

Warm spring seemed to break around her as she prayed, and Bridgit Moreen's heart's desire, earnestly besought, rose finally to the gate of heaven. And then Celia lifted her own heart's desire and laid it alongside.

"County Kerry, darlint—and God knows it's a fair long way from the place we are sittin' in." The place they were sitting in was Miss Maitland's own study. There was a little table spread for tea, with silver and fine linen. Bridgit Moreen, in a decent, black dress and a small bonnet that had been turned back to front and front to back for ten years, sat tranquilly in a big chair and lifted her face to her hostess.

"I was born in County Kerry and raised there, and when I come away I was twenty years old."

"So young!"

"So old, darlint. It depends on what comes to us how old we are at all, at all."

"True," assented her friend.

There was a great deal of dignity in this old scrubwoman. Miss Maitland treated her like an honored guest. It had occurred to her quite suddenly to pick Bridgit up out of East Eightieth Street, and to ask her for tea, and Bridgit had come with the same simplicity with which she was asked.

"Nothing much has ever happened to me, Bridgit," said Celia meditatively.

"Shure, ye're young still, darlint—you've no age at all, shure."

Miss Maitland laughed.

"At twenty," said Bridget Moreen, "I was a little thing, a happy thing, a blessed thing, and a foolish thing, miss, and the Lord knows I've kept bits of all that for forty years." Her face grew suddenly set—so set that Miss Maitland asked: "Why, what came to you, Bridgit?" The old woman glanced at her pityingly.

"What would it be at all, at all, to do damage like that—to bring one up to the saints of God, and forever after to cast one out into the cold—it's love, amn't it?"

The old woman had a pair of worn gloves very black and mended. She had taken them off to drink her tea. She now put them on. Even the pair of gloves had a fashion of their own, and, with the bonnet, dated back some ten years.

Miss Maitland turned to the little piano at the end of the study. On it stood a bowl of great, soft roses, red and sweet. They had come that morning with a card which told her that Lord Farrell was back in New York. Miss Maitland sat down before the piano.

"Shall I sing you a little song, an Irish song, Bridgit?"

"The way it would be like heaven, miss."

Miss Maitland sang, and she was just about finishing when a card was brought her at the piano where she was sitting.

"Bridgit, I must ask you to excuse me," said Celia. "I am so glad you came." She saw that the tears stood in the eyes of her visitor. Bridgit did not move.

"There are two more verses of it, I'm thinkin'."

"Yes," said Miss Maitland, and hesitated.

Her heart was beating, but the hearts of women beat at one sole thing. The man downstairs was the person of all the world she wished to see—she could

not see him too soon. She looked at Bridgit's face.

"Yes, there are two more verses." She sat down and sang them both.

"When the Lord had done with making Eden with His richest bounty,
Sure, it seems He fell a dreamin'
And He made the Kerry County."

"Sure, the breath of Heaven's in it,
Green the grass and red the berry.
You have never heard a linnet
Till you have heard him sing in Kerry."

Celia thought that Bridgit Moreen's face had spiritualized. "Can it be the beer she does not take, or simply the fact that my eyes are clearer?"

Miss Maitland's eyes were lovely at any time.

Bridgit Moreen made her own reflections about her mistress.

"Shure, ye're growin' older, the day, miss, darlint."

"Bridgit, don't say such a thing."

"Goin' toward summer, we are.
When, miss, darlint, summer is here,
shure—and hot enough it gets—it's yerself will be goin' away."

"I do not know."

"When I hear the whistles blow, I'm thinkin' of the happy boats that go where they will, and they *come*, too."

Miss Maitland repeated softly: "The ships that go and come."

She was thinking of them, too. Bridgit's point of view was cheerful, for she repeated: "The ships that *come*."

Celia was timid before making a confession to the old woman.

"Bridgit, you know I am praying always."

"I know that, shure."

"How do you know it?"

"Weren't you afther givin' me your sacred word?"

"Yes, of course," said Miss Maitland.

"Shure, all a Friday I seem to feel a wave so big go over me it could ride any ship to strand."

"Will a *ship* bring you what you want?" Miss Maitland asked. "Is it something from home—from Kerry?"

But the old woman seemed suddenly frozen, and, rising from where she sat, she went over to the window and pulled

the curtain, looking out upon the river, then turning, she said to Celia rather sharply:

"Never you mind; shure, isn't it in the hands of God?"

It was the sixth Friday.

Her prayer for Bridgit and her prayer for herself now went side by side, and the petitions beat their wings beside heaven's gates. Celia found that she loved with all her heart, and was no longer a saint, just a woman. She visited her poor, and, without knowing it, worked miracles, for she carried within her a fire that lighted a dozen hearths. She carried love with her, and warmed a dozen breasts. When, later in life, she could look back upon that period of her servitude, she understood why she had not worked miracles before. She understood that love is the fulfilment of the law, and that without it in the human breast, no miracles whatever can be wrought. She began and ended her visits at Bridgit's door, and the little room grew like a shrine to her; and on one of the Fridays she found herself sitting there, and, unknown to Bridgit, made her weekly prayer under the tenement roof. There, as Bridget talked, Celia bowed her beautiful head on her hands and sat praying. By the cupboard, Bridgit's little plaster image of the Virgin above its holy lamp swam before Celia's eyes. Celia had become mystic in these seven weeks. Alone in the world, with no intimate friend, reserved and timid by nature, she began now to feel the need of a confidante, and Bridgit Moreen seemed motherly to her. She began to think she could turn almost as to a mother to this worn, old-faced Irishwoman. She raised her eyes, as she prayed, to the image of the Virgin, and murmured aloud a woman's name. Miss Maitland said: "Mary," but Bridgit Moreen, from the other end of the room, answered: "Miss, darlint," and came over to her.

Celia put out her hand. "I am terribly unhappy."

"The day and hour ye are!" exclaimed the old Irishwoman, and she touched the hands of her visitor.

"I am terribly happy."

"The saints of God, it's in love ye are?"

"Yes." Miss Maitland trembled.

Bridgit Moreen sat down near her, her old face transfigured by the look of love—back, as it were, forty years—the time when she was in love herself. The faces of the two women looking at each other were beautiful, touched alike by the sacred torch; on one face was the flame, on the other the reflection given back after a lifetime.

"It's goin' away he is?"

"Yes."

"The Lord Almighty give you heart and soul!"

"Yes."

"But," said the old Irishwoman, "it's the way he'll be comin' back to ye!"

"I do not know; perhaps not."

"Then it's a power of prayer and faith ye'll be needin' to keep the fire of hope in ye for forty years!"

"Bridgit, I could not live without him *one year!*" The old woman stood pitiless.

"But ye can that, and then more." And, after a second, she asked: "He's done you no wrong, has he?"

"Wrong? No."

"But why is he goin' away from ye, honey?"

"That is the strange part of it," said Miss Maitland, as she might have said it to her mother; "he is not frank with me. I do not know why he is going. He is going back to his own country."

"Follow him," said the old Irishwoman firmly.

Miss Maitland smiled. "I wish I could."

On the afternoon when Bridgit had left Celia, she went down to the drawing-room to meet Lord Farrell. He had said to her: "I heard you singing an Irish song as I waited. Will you sing it for me again?" She had done so. The explorer stood by her side when she sang him "County Kerry."

"You have a beautiful voice, sure, my lady," he said, smiling.

4

"And *you* have a beautiful brogue, Lord Farrell! Are you Irish?"

"My father was an Englishman," he told her, "but my mother was Irish," and that is all he told her of himself during their friendship.

She finally decided that her heart was broken. It was a sad thing for a woman of thirty. She could now contrast the qualities of suffering—whether it is better to be bored than actually miserable. She would not have parted with her few memories. Farrell had said to her: "I have never wanted to marry a woman until now. I have been cursed with a passion for liberty. It seems to me as though the whole world was not wide enough for me to wander. He travels the farthest who travels alone, you know." Lord Farrell was holding both her hands when he spoke those words, and finished, looking at her, "I have now reached the journey's end."

Yet he had not asked her to marry him. She was growing sure that he would not do so, and he made to her no more complete declaration. Why? She was sure there was something else in his life, and she suffered.

She went to see Bridgit again, and the Irishwoman sat peeling potatoes; the day was warm, the window was open, and the whistles blew their weird music of greeting and farewell. Celia spread a clean towel over her lap, and with Bridgit began to peel potatoes. As Bridgit protested, Celia said: "Let me work, it is the only thing I want to do." Bridgit nodded. "I've been doin' the like for forty years to keep from thinkin'."

"You can keep from thinking, but not from suffering."

"The Lord love ye, dear!"

"Bridgit, tell me your love story."

There was a silence, and in it Celia felt that she had been indiscreet, and waited painfully. The cutting of the crisp potatoes and the falling skins made a little sound, while the old creature's rich voice broke the silence:

"As yerself will be tellin' yer love story forty years from now to some heart in pain!"

"You had a lover in Kerry, Bridgit?"

"The while I did," said the old woman, "and meself not so high as his heart in anythin' but love!"

"You were married?"

The old woman stopped peeling and asked sternly: "Shure, is it a tinker's daughter with one frock to her back and no coverin' to her head but the hair the Lord gave her, that the lord of the county would be marryin', miss?"

"Poor Bridgit!"

"Poor, is it!" said the old woman. "Saints of God, darlint, it's not when ye are in *love* that ye're poor!"

"Our cabin stood at the brink of the downs, and when the Lord had put out the sun, I'd slip off to the shore and find him. And so, miss, honey, winter and summer, for better than nor a year, we cheated the world. Then his father discovered it, and sent him to the far Indies, and he died there, and I never seen him again."

Her hand rested on the pan of potatoes in her lap, her old face was lifted to her companion.

"Don't be sayin' 'poor Bridgit' yet, miss, honey, for my child was born."

"Your child!"

"With the light of heaven on his head, miss, and the sweet breath of flowers in his little mouth, and he grew so large as to stand at my knee."

She waited so long that Miss Maitland whispered. "He died, Bridget?" The old woman started: "Glory be to God! There was no death in that craythure! He was born of love and life, miss, darlint; that's not the kind that die. They took him from me when his father died, and the old lord had me put on a ship and sent to the far countrys."

Looking at Celia almost fiercely, Bridgit Moreen said: "Now call me that if ye like!"

"Call you what, Bridgit?"

"Poor! Glory be to God, poor, indeed!"

"And you heard nothing about him all these years?"

The old woman shook her head.

"Them as knew me in Kerry wasn't to write to me on pain of losin' their lands and homes; still, wan way or an-

other, here and there, I've had bits of news. They tell me he is the greatest gentleman in Kerry, with a big height like his father's, and stars in his eyes, I'll be bound."

"And you have never gone back to find him?"

The old woman's usually gentle voice slightly raised itself. She spread out her withered hands.

"What would I take him—the marks of toil and poverty? Wouldn't they be fine gifts to bring a great gentleman like him? Would ye have me remind him of his nameless birth?"

There was a pause. The old woman drew the back of her hand across her eyes and said simply to Miss Maitland:

"Now, it's yerself will be afther tellin' me your love story, miss, darlint."

She had returned from her visit to Bridgit, and her home seemed lonelier than ever. It was her custom to dress for dinner, though, as a rule, she dined alone. She chose on this evening her most becoming dress, lingered a little over her toilet, and, when dinner was announced, went down to the dining room in somewhat of state.

As she sat before the table throughout the meal, it seemed to her that she sat with ghosts of what might have been, had she been one of those blessed women who were part of a family, and her imagination filled the empty chairs.

Her dinner was a farce, and when, at last, she rose, with relief, she went into the drawing-room. She had hardly seated herself when Lord Farrell was announced. Celia, as she gave him her hand, was afraid that her eyes would appear as blind to him as they felt, for she could scarcely see him. Farrell held her hand a moment, kissed it, and said:

"I've come to hear you sing before I go."

"To hear me sing?"

"Yes—'Kerry'—it haunts me, and I want to take away an indelible impression of your voice."

Celia went to the piano and played through the notes of the melody, but did not sing it.

"Do you believe in prayer, Lord Farrell?" she asked, smiling.

She saw, as he sat near her, that he was under the spell of a great emotion.

"Now why do you ask me that?" he said.

"Because I have been making something of a *neuvaine*—only I have been praying for seven days instead of nine."

He was leaning on the piano, and bent down to her.

"For what have you worn the altar bare—"

He paused, but Celia knew that there lingered a word on his lips. She thought she could have told what that word was from his tone, and the brogue he had unconsciously slipped into recalled another voice to her.

"For what are you praying?"—and she could have finished, "honey, darlin'?"

"I do not quite know," said Miss Maitland.

Lord Farrell laughed gently.

"Women never know what they want, then?"

"Do men?"

"Terribly well."

Sure, the sky has violets in it
And the beautiful stars are very
Bright for lovers—

"I know an old woman," said Miss Maitland—and she did not lift her eyes to him, for her heart beat so hard that she thought he would hear it—"a dear, charming old Irishwoman, and she knows what she wants."

Farrell evidently did not hear what she said or take an interest in the old Irishwoman.

He put his hands on Celia's shoulders; let them slip along her arms; lifted her hands from the piano keys, and buried his lips in them, as if they were flowers that he wanted to scent and kiss.

"I know what I want, Celia," and he kissed her.

She sat by him, his hand holding hers.

"I couldn't go out of the country without telling you," said Farrell.

"Now, I have told you that I love you. I have asked you to be my wife—but don't you give me your answer—not till I tell you to."

He lifted his hand and saw her pale and suffering.

"I have given you my answer," she murmured.

Lord Farrell gently touched her lips with his finger.

"No, not yet—not yet."

He rose.

"Will you call your maid—or get on your things? I have my motor at the door; I want you to go with me and see my mother."

"Your mother!" exclaimed Celia. "Lady Farrell—is she in America?"

"She is here, and I want to take you to see her."

Celia went out to get her things.

It was the seventh Friday, the late evening of the last day of prayer. Miracles are daily taking place in Second Avenue, but they are not all recorded in the newspapers. A child fell from the fourth story into the yard, was caught by the clothesline, whirled round and round like a top, and fell on its feet, unhurt! Mrs. Schmidt found her purse with the rent money and twenty-five dollars over in her cupboard—and, *Gott in Himmel*, hadn't she put it in the cupboard empty as the stove! And that was empty enough.

Mrs. Schmidt was telling Bridgit Moreen of her find. Bridgit Moreen, in her cleanest print dress, her cleanest apron, and a serene, peaceful face, sat knitting a gray stocking.

"Saints of God, dear, wasn't I sittin' here a whilst since, and thinkin' no more of miracles than to-morrow's cleanin' at the janitor's room"—no more scrubbing and cleaning, Bridgit Moreen!—"and didn't himself walk in on me, fillin' up the doorway with the height of him, and me peelin' potatoes!"—No more peeling potatoes, Bridgit Moreen!

"Is this Mrs. Bridgit Moreen?" asks he and his voice trembled.

"Miss Maitland is the only real lady I have seen for a long time, and himself

was the only gentleman, and, glory be to God, I put them together!

"Is it yerself," says I, "that's breakin' a woman's heart—Heaven spoil ye?"

"Didn't he stand thremblin' by the chair, leanin' his hand on the table. 'How breakin' a woman's heart?' says he, troubledlike.

"Don't tell me ye don't love her," says I; "she's made for nothin' else, shure. Isn't she sits here cryin' her beautiful eyes out by the table?"

"What do ye mean at all?" says he, half smilin', half thremblin', like ashamed he was of himself.

"I mean none but herself." I told him plain and clear, "Miss Celia Maitland."

"Miss Maitland?" says he, and he looked more manfullike then; "do ye know her?"

"Do I know her, is it? Amn't she prayin' for me these seven Fridays for my heart's desire?"

"Then, shure, Mrs. Schmidt, if I didn't think he was goin' to fall where he stood, he looked so strange at me, God Almighty, I thought he was goin' to cry before me eyes.

"I do love her," says he, and then axes me, "do ye?"

"Well, that is neither here nor there to a man," I answered him, "but I don't mind tellin' ye that if ever an angel got out of paradise when St. Peter wasn't lookin', *she* was the girl!"

"Saints of God, didn't he get up and kiss me on both me cheeks, and sort of hold me, lookin' like a wild man, muterin'."

It was Mrs. Schmidt who heard them coming up the stairs.

She told Bridgit Moreen, and Bridgit Moreen, usually hospitality itself, put her hand on the German woman's shoulder, half pushing her:

"Now go up to the next floor, dear; it's more elegant that I should see them alone."

The two entered together the tenement room, through whose windows, for many years, Bridgit had looked on the East River and watched the boats navigated, starting on their journeys and returning.

By her spotless table she received her visitors. They stood before her side by side. She put out one kind, old hand, her old voice, in its rich brogue, heartily tender—triumphant.

"The Lord love ye, miss, darlint, but it's heart glad I am."

"Tell her, Celia," said Lord Farrell.

Celia took Bridgit's hand as though the worn, old hand were sacred; she kissed it; a few tears fell on it. Celia looked at Farrell through her tears. She shook her head.

"No, you must tell her."

Bridgit laughed sweetly.

"Don't mind tellin'; shure, I could read it with me eyes shut."

Lord Farrell took her other hand.

"You thought you knew me when I came in an hour ago?"

"I did that," smiled the old woman, nodding.

"Well," said Farrell, and his voice shook, "you were right, you knew the lover. Don't you ever wear spectacles, Mrs. Moreen?"

There was something as he spoke, now she heard it, something rich and deep in his voice; now it awakened way down in her memory a resonance; she heard it, she heard it again, and far back in her brain and heart the tone echoed.

Celia had placed a chair for her. Mrs. Moreen sank down in it. From her pocket she took a pair of spectacles, put them on, and lifted her eyes, thus aided, to the tall figure of the man who stood near her.

Lord Farrell still held her hand; he patted it gently.

"Now," he said, "it is a long way that leads back, isn't it? But look at me; did you ever see anybody like me in your life?"

They saw her catch her breath and lift her worn, old hand to her eyes, as if she would shade them from a light that might blind her forever.

"Saints of God!" she murmured, and said it again, for it was a prayer to her. "Saints of God, is it my little boy ye are?"

Farrell knelt at her knees. She put her hands on his shoulders, scanning the

face she had not seen since it lay on her breast in infancy.

"There are stars in yer eyes," she murmured, "like his."

Then she gave a cry—such as neither of them will ever forget—and drew his head down upon her heart.

Bridgit Moreen—Bridgit Moreen, of Kerry, mother of Lord Romney Patrick Farrell, legitimatized grandson of Lord Romney Patrick Dennis O'Sullivan Farrell, went out between her son and the district visitor. Her hands on an arm of each; wearing the rusty, old bonnet which had been turned and turned for ten years, she went out from the tenement on Second Avenue, and it knew her no more. Her footsteps were uncertain on the stairs which she had mounted wearily year after year. She sat between them in the motor that rolled her away into a new life.

"Now where at all, at all, are ye takin' an old woman?"

"To my home, dear," said Celia Maitland. "Will you come?"

Bridgit Moreen laughed happily.

"Will I come, is it—and the boy?"

Farrell said:

"I will come to see you in the morning, mother, and tell you how I have searched for you on two continents."

The old woman murmured: "It was herself prayin' that done it," and Farrell agreed: "Yes, it was herself."

Across the old woman between them, Lord Farrell looked at Celia. He put his hands over Mrs. Moreen's.

"This is my mother," he said.

"She shall be mine," said Miss Maitland.

The old lady laughed again.

"Isn't it the way with Heaven's blessin's! Wasn't I only askin' for a son, and didn't the Lord give me better than I wished—the two of ye!"

She joined their hands.

"Saints of God, the two of ye!"

After a moment she said:

"The Lord knows I prayed to see yer face, Romney, and it's all I prayed for. I niver thought the likes of me could cross yer path. It's too much—the both of ye!"

Bridgit Moreen was very small, and she looked up at the taller people timidly.

The motor rolled into Fifth Avenue.

"Shure, I used to scrub there," she said quietly, "Fifth Avenue and Fifty-third Street."

She was holding their hands.

"Children, won't ye be ashamed of the likes of me?"

Lord Farrell bent down and kissed her.

"Mother!" he said, "mother!"

"The way I hear that word at last," she murmured, "that heavenly word!"

Celia bent down and kissed her.

"Mother," she whispered, "mother—my mother died when I was born."

Mrs. Moreen gave a sob.

"I'll be her, honey, darlint! She hears me sayin' it where she sits with the saints of God!"



THE SEEING EYE

SMALL things, and humble, greatest lessons hold,
Which to the seeing eye they soon unfold—
As on some thorny road my way I pass
I get new courage from a blade of grass,
Which 'mid the turmoil, and the weeds that kill,
Holds fearlessly its course appointed still!

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.

THE YELLOW DIAMOND PENDANT



MAY FUTRELLE

IT'S a wonderful thing, no doubt, to come of a distinguished family, whose unsullied name is something that money cannot buy and worth the price of priceless jewels; whose ancestors took part in the affairs of nations, and all that sort of thing. I tried to remember it when I looked into my empty pocketbook, and when I saw the patient, resigned look in mumsey's eyes that always meant: "Where shall we go next?" You see, we hadn't had a roof over our heads—except some one's else—since my father died, because what was left to him of his share of the Callaway fortune disappeared long ago, and his life insurance went to pay his debts and let his soul rest in peace.

I know, to those persons who saw me fluttering here and there from one social engagement to another, bedecked in wonderful, imported gowns, my arms full of roses—those pink ones that Billy sends to me and that always look—well, different—I seemed quite the usual butterfly, blithe and happy, and free from care, as butterflies are expected to be. I know they wouldn't have believed it had I suddenly announced to them that my wonderful, imported gowns were Cousin Mary's cast-offs, the reason I could afford to wear them being that Cousin Mary lived two thousand miles away, and imported gowns have a mussy look, anyway. They wouldn't have believed that I hadn't a roof over my head except when Will and Caroline were at Palm

Beach, or in Europe; that my only source of revenue was what I could win at auction; that I angled for invitations, as far as decency allowed, for mumsey as well as for myself; that I was a social parasite, and the Lord knows what would have become of me, ultimately, if Billy Ward hadn't taken it into his dear head to fall in love with me. True, nothing definite had been settled about Billy and me. There was mumsey to be reckoned with, and that awful thing of Billy's great-grandfather having peddled matches for a living when mine was the blue-blooded governor of the State. I regretted I had not told mumsey about our engagement before I packed her off for a month's visit.

I wanted to believe that she was not going to be disappointed with me—poor old mumsey—but I knew that, instead of thinking of the money and all it surely would mean to us, she was going to think of nothing but that match business, and that a Callaway was selling herself. I knew she would never, never believe that I loved Billy for himself alone; that deep down in my heart I should have been glad, glad if he hadn't had a cent; it would have forever rid me of the awful resolution I had made about marrying a man for his money. I knew just how deeply rooted all her old-fashioned prejudices were, prejudices she would not hesitate to express when the question was marriage. I knew, and I kept hoping otherwise. *Ca fait mal!*

The half-hearted snow patting against the windowpane made my nerves jumpy. I arose and paced in a silly sort of fashion up and down Caroline's pretty sitting room, holding in my hand a letter which told me that she and Will would reach home the twentieth, ergo, I should have to get out! Snow is very pretty, even exciting, when one has a moleskin coat and a fat bank account, but when one possesses nothing except a reputation for being a very superior sort of butterfly, a name, and family pride for which one's ancestors have fought, and bled, and died, and which must go on stainless to the end—well, then snow begins to conjure up pictures of a homeless heroine and out in the cold world alone.

My situation was so absurd, I laughed—a little hysterical sort of burst of merriment. There was I, in the midst of luxury, wearing casually a gown that just have cost Cousin Mary a thousand francs, a spoiled beauty—Jim Marston once called me that—whose favor was a man's passport to social recognition, engaged to a man with so much money that he, himself, hardly knew the sum total, with not a roof over my head after the twentieth; unless I should go on managing a lot of stupid people who would ask me to stay with them—climbers whose position in our social world always went up a peg or two by my presence in the house. It was terribly funny—just that, truly.

I don't know why I hesitated over angling for an invitation—I never had before; or why Will and Caroline's home-coming should have given me such a feeling of utter desolation. For five years we had pursued this course, and I always had gone my way hopefully, cheerfully, letting each day take care of itself as long as I was stowed away in luxury and mumsey was taken care of. No doubt, love had changed me, and I had come plump up against the fact that all my life I had been leading an aimless sort of existence, actuated by not one noble thought or impulse, just hanging on with all my strength to the top of the social lad-

der, a place made for me by my ancestors; toppling in the air, for, since my father's death, the ladder had been unsupported by the Callaway fortune which it always had had to lean upon; joggling the ladder this way and that, like a clever juggler; even at times airily kissing my fingers to the audience of my numerous admirers. Indeed, love had changed me, and life suddenly seemed very real and important.

I sat down and let my head fall upon my arms, while two tears rolled slowly down my cheeks and splashed upon the *point l'épaule* which edged the sleeves of my imported gown. There was no cause to cry, except that love is an inexplicable thing, and the heart of a girl something which she herself hardly understands. After a while I pressed my hand against my breast, where hung a little locket inclosing a tiny picture of Billy. I did not look at it, but I pressed it tightly, tightly; somehow, at that moment, I could not look upon the face of the man I loved. Aren't women silly?

I dried my eyes, the storm was all over, the sunshine came out; at least inside, for outside the snow whirled and swirled as snow very properly should do. I went to my desk—Caroline's desk—and brought forth a little book wherein I jot down names and dates for future reference. The names are always prospective hostesses, the dates when I manage that I shall be asked to visit. I checked off the month and found I had two places from which to choose—one, an old friend of mumsey's, to be used in case of sheer desperation; the other, the Seymour Browns, climbers, who had managed to push into the social game through downright cleverness. There, for a month, I would be absolute mistress of a blue-and-white bedroom fit for a princess, a rose boudoir, and a marble bath, in exchange for shedding the luster of old-time aristocracy over the place, and corralling for them a few exclusive dinner parties.

I noted the telephone number, and five minutes later I was gushing to Mrs. Seymour Brown that I would be per-

flectly delighted to spend a month with her, and her most charming family.

I was hanging up the receiver, when Martha came in with a card. I took it and read the name:

Raoul de Beauvais.

"Who is he? What does he want?" I asked Martha.

"He says he comes from your cousin, Mr. Herbert Callaway. He wants to see you," Martha answered.

"Good—good gracious!" I exclaimed. "My cousin, Herbert Callaway—well, of all things in the world! I'll see Monsieur de Beauvais in a moment."

I scrambled to my feet, fluffed my hair, stuck an extra pin in, and powdered my nose, while I tried to dig out from the back of my memory the things I remembered in connection with my cousin, Herbert Callaway.

Twelve years before, after a spectacular year in college, where he was mixed up in everything discreditable—from the punching of a professor's nose to the smuggling of a chorus girl into one of the dormitories, and the consequent scandal of the disappearance of some diamond rings and things—his mother had sailed away to Europe with him. It took a while for the whirlwind in America to settle, at least in that small and select circle connected with the name of Callaway. Nothing had been heard of Herbert Callaway or his mother from that time, except an occasional word from travelers who had seen them viewing the races at Auteuil, or who had seen Herbert gambling at the Casino in Monte Carlo. The news of his mother's death reached us, and once a vague rumor that he had tried to elope with an American heiress. Then even rumor trailed off, until, now, an emissary from him suddenly appeared in Caroline's drawing-room.

I think my heart missed a beat or two before I went in, and how I wished for mumsey. It's a panicky thing to have a friend of a disreputable cousin appear in such an unexpected sort of way, without even the usual courtesy of

a preliminary note, and I wasn't sure just how I should receive him.

Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais was a tall, clean-cut, good-looking chap, rather more American than French, except for his clothes. He came to his feet as I entered, clicked his heels together, and bowed in true Continental fashion.

"Miss Callaway?" he inquired, with only the merest trace of an accent. "I bring to you a gift from your cousin, Mr. Herbert Callaway"—he extended a small, neat package—"which I am most happy to deliver. When the mother of Mr. Callaway died, she requested him to send the jewel to you. Mr. Callaway wishes me to apologize for his seeming neglect in not so doing. Business brings me here, and I was most happy to be of service to Mr. Callaway, and to you. Now, if you will excuse me, I must go. My train leaves within the hour."

I took the package, just a little amazed at his brisk, businesslike manner, and tried to help him make his hurried exit as gracefully as possible; but when the door closed upon his departing, foreign-looking figure, and his elusive accent, I had that rooted-to-the-spot sort of feeling.

A thousand things surged into my mind. Questions, all sorts of questions. Questions I might have put to him about my cousin if he only had given me the chance. He had not told me, even, where my cousin was, so that I could thank him for the gift.

I examined the package. There was no address on it, nothing, not even my own name. I opened it, expecting to find an old-fashioned jewel, just a little remembrance from my aunt. Instead, I beheld a most amazing pendant, the center of which was a huge, yellow diamond of the particular color that is so rare, consequently so valuable.

I stood there holding that gorgeous bauble in a trembling palm, while my mouth inelegantly dropped open through sheer amazement. I remember glancing once at the door where Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais had gone out, much as if I expected him to return to

claim the jewel. And the only thing I could frame in my muddled brain was: "Well, I never!"

I think Fate must have a sense of humor. Sometimes things get so jumbled, and are thrown together in such a queer way, that the result is terribly funny; although it was a long while before I could see anything humorous in the way Fate tossed me bodily into the arms of the Seymour Browns, and almost in the same breath sent me a more or less mysterious pendant from my long-lost cousin, Herbert Callaway. If I hadn't been so credulous, so utterly foolish, I should have taken that horrid, yellow-diamond bauble to Billy and told him the silly circumstances of my possession of it; but I didn't, and that was the cause of all the trouble.

I was sitting in my rose boudoir at the Seymour Browns, cogitating on what a horrible thing it was to depend upon the hand which Fate deals from a pack of cards, when Barbara Brown rapped on the door and came in. She looked pale and scared, her breath was coming in little gasps as if she had taken the stairs two at a time, and she came toward me with her hands flung out in a helpless gesture.

"Kit!" she breathed tensely—just that truly—"Kit, I'll have to tell you!"

She seemed so frightened, so as if she were ready to crumple up in a faint, that I got to my feet, tried frantically to think where the smelling salts were, and, failing, had the presence of mind to wheel a chair toward her, into which she sank with a little whisper of a sigh. I was wondering if I should shriek for assistance when she sat up suddenly.

"Don't call any one!" she commanded. "For Heaven's sake, Kit—No one must know—except yourself. I wouldn't even dare tell mother. Let me get my breath, and I'll tell you. I've had an awful scare."

I removed her hat, chafed her wrists, and watched the color come slowly back to her cheeks. Little dabs of perspiration stood out upon her forehead, and when she spoke her voice had a dry, cracked sound.

"Kit," she said, "Herbert Callaway has been hurt."

"Herbert Callaway!" I repeated, much as if every letter in the name had been an exclamation point.

"Yes. Oh! I'll have to begin at the beginning. I'm in love with Herbert Callaway."

"In love with Herbert Callaway," my lips repeated, but no sound came, and I stood there staring at her stupidly, wondering if I had suddenly gone crazy, or if she had; and what in the world Herbert Callaway, in Europe somewhere, had to do with anything, any way.

"If he should die!" she moaned, and covered her face with her hands.

I snapped my lips shut, then I opened them again.

"If you'll begin at the beginning, and keep on—" I said.

"Yes, yes, of course," she agreed. "Let me think. There's so much to tell, and naturally you are wondering why I've never told you before, and oh, Kit, I love you because you are his cousin—no, no, I don't mean that. I love you for yourself—"

"Come back to the beginning," I suggested.

"Oh, yes. Well, I met Herbert in Monte Carlo. I didn't know you then, Kit. We were just sticking our noses in here, but, of course, I knew who you were; and when Herbert— Anyhow, we tumbled head over heels in love with each other."

"Good—good gracious!" I murmured.

"Father began to bellow and shout when he found it out. Said he didn't give a damn how fine Herbert's family was, that he was trotting in a thieving set of noblemen—Count Pazzini did have some trouble about a pearl necklace—and trumped up a lot of silly stuff about some college thefts. It was all so absurd I told Herbert that to prove my faith in him I'd marry him on the spot."

"Then you were the American heiress with whom he tried to elope?" I asked.

"We never tried to elope," she de-

nied. "Herbert is too honorable. The outcome of it all was, after father had given Herbert a split lip, and Herbert had presented father with a black eye—oh, a regular scrap, dear, bourgeois to a degree!—father offered Herbert a job in the Paris office, told him he'd see he had all sorts of chances to work up to manager if he had the—er—stuff in him, *but* for two years he must leave me absolutely alone. Put him on his honor, and all that sort of thing. Herbert consented, went to Paris on the next train, and—well, that's how matters are."

"But the accident," I cried, suddenly remembering it. "He's hurt, you say. Where is he?"

"That's the horrible part," she replied. "I don't know. I'm coming to that as fast as I can. As I was getting out of the limousine just now, a man came toward me. It was rather dark, and I couldn't see him distinctly, but he had the sort of air that—er—appeals. You always know a gentleman, don't you? And I saw him quite plainly afterward—I switched on the light for a moment. He said he was from Herbert Callaway, and would I take him to the Union Station in a hurry, while he would tell me something extremely important to myself. I did. In the car he admitted that Herbert had not instructed him to come to me, but that he was in America on a secret mission, a dangerous mission, was near here, and had been—been shot! He was not at liberty to explain, but he thought I should know that Herbert was in need of money and friends. My father *must not know!* He said it just like that, *must not know!*—and warned me not to tell any one—any one, you understand—but oh, I— He said Herbert's very life might depend upon it."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, now thoroughly alarmed.

"Kit, I was scared blue. I tried not to get hysterical, and do any silly shrieking, and I tried to see things clearly. Herbert needs me, and, more than anything else, he needs my faith in him; you see that, don't you? I gave the man all the money I had—sixty-

three dollars and thirteen cents—and told him to come back to-morrow for more. He promised me he would. He impressed upon me the necessity of my being in ignorance of Herbert's whereabouts because—oh!—I might attempt to go to him!"

"It could have been a holdup scheme," I declared.

"But it wasn't," she insisted. "I thought that all out—that's the reason I switched on the light, to have a look at him. Kit, if you only had heard the man, you would know how—how foolish, ridiculous it would be to suspect. He was so—anxious, and so—silent. Just said those few things that were—were true! I feel it. I know it."

I felt it, too, I couldn't explain why, and I knew how much trouble could come of silly suspicion, but I made one more effort to discredit the story.

"Do you hear from Herbert?" I asked. "Do you know he is not in Paris?"

"And that's the queer part. I don't know," she answered. "I get a letter once a month. At Herbert's suggestion, the letters are sent to father. He, at first—at Herbert's suggestion—opened them. Lately he has given the letters to me unopened. This month's letter was due over a week ago. *It hasn't come!*"

"But letters can go astray," I assured her. "A thousand things could cause delay. Have you spoken to your father?"

"I—I've been afraid," she told me. "Oh, I just knew something terrible was going to happen!"

Perhaps it was her own panic that affected me; my knees were shaking, my heart had climbed out of its place, and was lodged somewhere in the vicinity of my throat. I tried to think of something ordinary—that's the way to get back to earth, to think of something ordinary—while through it all was a nagging, persistent query in my mind that had to do with a mysterious pendant which had for its center a most unusual yellow diamond.

"Ask your father if the letter has come," I suggested. "Ask him—"

She came to her feet with her hands

thrown out in that helpless little heroine gesture.

"My father must not know," she said. "Oh, how thankful I am I have asked him nothing! I don't quite understand, Kit. I guess it's—it's too big, too real for us to understand, but please, please help me keep my faith in Herbert. We will see that man to-morrow and ask him— You must promise me not to tell any one. I should not have told you, Kit. We may be holding Herbert's life in the hollow of our hands. You promise?"

I nodded, trying to choke my heart back into place, and trying to be calm. She was right; it was too big, too real for us to understand. I had been out five seasons, and I thought I had experienced all the sensations this world has to offer. I know differently now, but the responsibility of that moment was so real to me I shall never forget it. I only wonder that we, two silly girls, had the courage to keep that awful secret to ourselves, and to go through what followed.

We had a dinner dance on that night, one of those exclusive affairs that I was able to influence. Barbara had been walking on air over it for a week, but social everything was forgotten in our anxiety over Herbert Callaway. We knew so little, we imagined so much. We talked in frightened little snatches as we dressed; Barbara trailing into my room, her maid patiently following, then back to her own premises, and I repeating her action. Once, when we were alone, I blurted out about the yellow-diamond pendant. I just couldn't keep it to myself any longer.

She stared at me, amazed.

"I can't make it fit in anywhere," she said, in a scared sort of whisper, after thinking it over.

"It's queer though, isn't it?"

She nodded, and we stood there, gazing stupidly at each other, feeling terribly helpless, somehow.

"It may be just a coincidence," Barbara suggested finally. "We are frightened, we are exaggerating everything—"

"I have never had any communica-

tion with Herbert Callaway, or his mother," I pointed out.

"But it was a natural thing for her to do, to send you a gift, a dying gift. Coming just at this time *could* be just a coincidence."

I shook my head; the whole thing was beyond me, truly.

And once she came and stood by me, embarrassed, hesitating.

"Have you any money?" she asked me finally. "As much as five hundred?"

"I—I think not," I replied. I had been giving I O U's the last two weeks, but, of course, she didn't know anything about my financial fix.

"I'm afraid to ask for it," she confided. "Mother would want to know why, and father—I can't run the risk of any one getting suspicious. Kit, did you ever pawn anything?"

I shook my head, thoroughly ashamed of the lie, but I just couldn't admit such a thing, and she trailed back to her room with a sad little droop to her head.

We were not fit for a dinner dance. We were two frightened ghosts. Barbara rubbed rouge into her pale cheeks, and tried to smile the fright out of her eyes, but I just let myself be pale and scared. I remember that at dinner I laughed more than I should have done, and blessed the Lord for two talkative men at either side of me.

Billy maneuvered me to the conservatory after dinner. I was very close to tears, for all my seemingly high spirits, and I felt as if I just wanted to throw myself into his arms and cry.

"What's the matter, dear?" he asked, as I dropped down in a secluded corner where, if I cried, no one would see me.

I actually bit a piece from the ivory sticks of my fan in my silly nervousness.

"I'm all right," I assured him, trying to smile.

Of course, he didn't believe me; lawyers are mind readers, anyway.

"Tell me the trouble," he entreated.

The tone was so sweet, so dear that the threatened tears welled, and splashed over. I remembered a time when he had said those very words to me, a time when I was in trouble, a time when I did not know that he loved me. I seized his hand suddenly and tried to carry it to my lips.

"Don't you dare!" he exclaimed. He caught me in his arms, he kissed me; my lips, my pale cheeks, my eyes, where more tears threatened, while I abandoned myself to his caress, and just thanked God for living.

"Now, what is the trouble?" he asked finally.

"Nothing is the trouble, dearest," I told him. I snuggled my fingers into his, and lay contentedly in his arms. "Sometimes, dear, I get just a bit—scared. Perhaps"—I gave him a look from under my lashes—"I'm afraid you will cease to love me."

"Kit, you darling!" he said, and—yes, he kissed me again.

"Very well, then," I laughed. "Just tell me you love me, just once, and we'll talk about the weather."

"I love you," he whispered. "I love you, I love you."

It is such moments that beget confidences. I wanted awfully to tell him all about that yellow-diamond pendant, and the mysterious man with his terrible message about Herbert Callaway, but I had to remember my promise to Barbara; and, no matter how many humorous things are said about it, to a woman a promise is a sacred thing. If only I had disregarded it, and told him, how much real agony he would have saved us.

"Kit," he said suddenly, "sometimes I, too, get just a little scared. This not having a roof over your dear head, and no——"

"Money," I finished, when he didn't go on.

"I don't like it. It keeps me uneasy."

"Why?" I asked. "Surely you don't think——"

He closed my lips with a kiss.

"I think nothing but that I want you

to marry me. To-morrow if you will. Will you?"

"No," I replied, and tried to free myself from his arms. "No, of course not."

He released me suddenly, arose, and, after striding up and down for a while, stopped, and flicked ruinously the delicate fronds of some rare ferns.

"Of course not," he repeated finally. "Of course not. You want a wedding, and you're quite right. A girl always wants to look back upon such things, doesn't she? Bridesmaids, a white gown, orange blossoms? Well, there's another way—I can settle some money on your mother."

"Oh!" I exclaimed. "Please, please don't! She would never accept it. You must not offer it. You know there's a—a possibility that she's going to object because—Billy, dearest, you must not do anything to offend her."

He frowned at a most unusual orchid, and gave the blossom a flip that would have caused its owner nervous prostration.

"Convention is an asinine thing," he remarked. "If we were on a desert island, you would be glad to accept food and shelter from me. You wouldn't think of convention, or offense. You'd be thanking God for food and life, not considering the means of obtaining it."

"Is there anything wrong with you?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied. "I don't like your going from house to house——"

"I've been doing it for five years," I reminded him.

He turned back impatiently and sat down again.

"It's going to stop now," he said. "And you are going to have your wedding, dear, the bridesmaids, the white gown, the orange blossoms. Also, you are going to promise that it shall be soon. An account will be opened for you in the Mutual Trust to-morrow."

"Billy!" I cried. "Oh! Surely you don't think I would touch it?"

"Dear, my mother——"

But I covered my face, now scarlet

with indignation, with my two trembling hands.

"Please, please!" I begged.

"Kit, my darling girl, be sensible—

I would not listen, I would not! It was a horrible thing to me, that offer of money, even after all the things I had been guilty of for five years—trading upon my lineage, living by my wits, a social parasite. My mind flew to that match peddler who had been Billy's great-grandfather, and I was about to make comparisons—scathing comparisons—between those ancestors of his and mine, when, suddenly, he knelt beside me and dropped his head against my trembling knees.

"Forgive me!" he begged. "You can't sacrifice your self-respect. I see that now. My darling, can you forgive me?"

I raised his head, and gazed long and earnestly into the depths of his brown eyes.

"We'll talk about the weather now," I said.

We awoke the next morning, Barbara and I, to the fact that we expected the mysterious messenger to bring us news of Herbert Callaway, and that we did not know how, or when, or where. Barbara had not thought to arrange a meeting place. Also, that we did not have any money for him when he arrived!

Barbara, early in the morning, trailed into my luxurious rose boudoir and signaled me to follow her. She passed through into her rooms of almost appalling richness. Everywhere, on all sides, was wealth—pictures, articles of virtu, quaint and expensive trifles; the dressing table was strewn with gold toilet articles representing a small fortune; the cupboards were hung with marvelous attire, another fortune, while poor Barbara just paused there in the middle of it, and wondered how she was going to get—money.

It was a silly situation, and amusing now, as I look back upon it, but to us at that time it bordered on tragedy.

"We must pawn something," she whispered to me, flinging out her hands

toward all the wealth the room contained, in the helpless little heroine gesture. "But what shall it be? How do you do it? Kit, do you know?"

I knew well enough, although I had denied it to her. I had pawned the Callaway pictures, and the Callaway silver. I even had negotiated the sale of the tickets when I found how utterly impossible it was ever to redeem them. I knew, to the extent of knowing the most reliable place, the interest, everything! I wanted to cover my eyes with the shame of such knowledge; I wanted to shut it out, forget it, but I just tried to look at her in the wonder-eyed sort of way she was regarding me.

"I—I think I can find out," I said.

"Dear, it's horrible!" she breathed tensely—truly that—"but I thought the situation over *all night long*, and there isn't any other way. If I should try to get money from any one, it would be unusual and suspicious. I never have any amount of actual money. I don't gamble. I—I simply cannot figure out an excuse for needing money, to-day, instantly, like this!"

She was so dear, so innocent, I just wanted to fling my arms about her, and thank the Lord that in these too-wise days there could be such a girl. I took the pretty, distressed face between my palms, kissed each cheek, French fashion, and went back to my rose boudoir. There I fussed an unnecessary length of time over an address book—I knew the address perfectly, too—called up a number on the phone, and finally went back to her with an address written on a slip.

"There's a place," I told her.

And quite as an inspiration had come to me the thing we could pawn—the yellow-diamond pendant!

"Kit!" Barbara exclaimed, when I made known my decision. "A dying gift from your aunt! Surely—"

"To what better use could it be put than saving her son's life?" I wanted to know.

"You're an angel!" she declared.

I do not like to think of that pawnshop episode; the planning, the scheming to which we resorted to disguise

our coming and going, the heavy veils we wore to escape a chance of recognition. Really, it was all worthy of the most dreadful murder ever committed.

I think we felt as if we were committing murder; I don't remember clearly because I've never dared. I know that, after an age of eternities, we found ourselves making our hysterical way back to the limousine, which we had left three blocks away in front of a department store. It was all over, and I was clutching—exactly that—between trembling fingers a roll of bills to be applied to the saving of Herbert Callaway's life; it was all over, but I don't think either of us dared breathe until we drew up at the Seymour Browns'.

The morning passed in agony. Barbara conceived the idea that the mysterious messenger would come from the shadow of the porte-cochère just as he had the night previously. She drove up and descended from the limousine surely a million times, without result. We always have had a wild desire to know what the chauffeur and the footman thought. Finally she could stand the suspense no longer. She took the stairs, two at a time, I'm sure, from the way she was breathing, fell limply across a rose divan in my rose boudoir, and burst into tears.

That was the beginning of the fireworks!

I had started to go to Barbara, whispering meanwhile words of endearment, of courage, when Mrs. Brown, looking much as if the end of the world had come, suddenly appeared before us.

"My dear child," she said to me, "don't faint, and, above all things, remember that I have perfect confidence in you."

Above all things, I remembered to keep my mouth closed. I recall, now, that in my excitement I tucked a curl into place, and wanted to ask a question, but couldn't think of one.

"Two detectives are below," she went on. "They—they have come to arrest you!"

I couldn't repeat "Arrest me!" The words just wouldn't come. Barbara came to her feet with a little scream.

"My God!" she exclaimed, terror-stricken, but the only emotion that possessed me was a wild desire to laugh.

"Of what am I accused?" I asked.

"You have pawned something that has been stolen," Mrs. Brown answered. "My dear child, I'm sure it's all a horrible mistake, you can explain—"

Barbara's eyes met mine. The yellow-diamond pendant! Herbert Callaway had stolen it!

Then she fainted!

The next half hour was one mad jumble. If I had followed my inclination, I should have stood in the middle of my rose boudoir and screamed. Instead, I very calmly doused Barbara, and the rose divan, telephoned for the doctor, telephoned for Billy, and suggested that Mrs. Brown telephone for her husband. And, indeed, we needed them all before that half hour was over, to say nothing of the two detectives who were already there.

Well, it seems that the pendant, among other things, had been stolen from the Peter Dusens, of Lexington, and was part of a series of sensational robberies that had taken place there. By the mysterious process which detectives employ, which we read about, and never understand, the gang of thieves responsible for these robberies had been traced to our city. The pawnshops of the whole country were, of course, being watched, and when the pendant made its appearance in the shop where Barbara and I pawned it, it was immediately recognized. We were easily traced, for we had gone straight to the limousine and home.

I had a highly exciting time explaining how the pendant came into my possession, it was such a ridiculous story; but Billy believed me, and, more wonderful than anything else, proved to the detectives how innocent I was.

Things then looked terribly black for Herbert, especially when Barbara and I had to admit that our reason for pawning the pendant was to get money for him; that he was in America secretly, and had been shot. But just there, almost like a scene in a play, Mr. Brown produced a cable, referring to

an important business deal, and proving conclusively that Herbert Callaway was in Paris. Two skeptical detectives had to verify this, of course, but before the answer was received, our little drama had whirled on to a climax.

Barbara, who was standing near a window, suddenly gave a bit of a scream.

"He's there!" she cried. "There under the porte-cochère!"

There, under the porte-cochère, was Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais! Evidently expecting Barbara to descend from the limousine, and foolishly hand him more money to be applied to the farce of saving Herbert Callaway's life. Billy always declared that he was a fool for coming back, but, perhaps, Billy knew better than did Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais that a woman cannot be depended on to keep things to herself, even when she is frightened; I should say, especially when she is frightened. It was a chance, of course, and to the thieves a very simple chance; an opportunity to get money and get away from a place where they were without funds, and could not convert any of the jewels in their possession into cash, being more or less cornered by the police.

Barbara and I refused to look, when one of the detectives, according to a prearranged plan, sauntered down the marble steps and, wheeling suddenly under the porte-cochère, snapped a pair of handcuffs on the delicate wrists of Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais. We took the stairs two at a time when Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais was forced to enter

the house, and forced to a confession, in Mr. Brown's library, of Herbert Callaway's innocence of any of the robberies. He finally admitted that Herbert was entirely ignorant of the use of his name in the distressing affair, was, indeed, in Paris, and unhurt—so far as he knew; the whole story having been fabrication. Billy was looking out for the honor of the family.

True, Monsieur de Beauvais knew Herbert—which goes to show that it is a hard thing to live down the past—knew enough of his private affairs to fix up a beautiful little plan of disposing of that incriminating yellow-diamond pendant to me, by leading me to believe that it was a dying gift from my aunt; and, by throwing suspicion upon me when I should wear the pendant, withdrawing it, if only temporarily, from the real thieves. He also knew enough of Herbert's private affairs to go to Barbara with a very plausible story, which tripped only when chance and coincidence took a fling at the game.

The others of the gang were appre-hended at the Union Station, where they awaited the appearance of Monsieur Raoul de Beauvais with the money to enable them to take the next train to parts unknown.

It was, indeed, a sensation when we discovered that one of the thieves was none other than Count Pazzini.

Oh, the letter? It had been delayed. Mr. Brown found it in his pocket when the excitement was over, and Barbara is awfully happy.

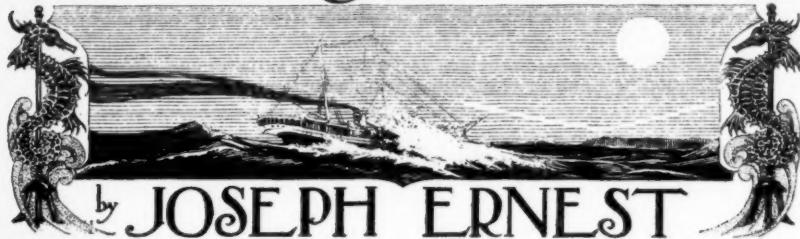
TRYST

A WINDING road I came away,
But straight my thoughts run back to thee,
They find thee where thou art to-day
And fond salute thy memory.

They lead thee back with them, till we
Now by my fire together sit,
Though fools a far way make of it,
Here from my solitude to thee.

CHRISTIAN GAUSS.

The Shanghaied Cherub



by JOSEPH ERNEST



ILL the public kindly disregard the inventions of the newspapers, and hear the story as it was told by "Tamale Tom" Cordoba?

Tamale Tom stands over six feet in his socks, weighs two hundred pounds, and possesses the shoulders of a bull and the temper, when challenged, of a famished hyena. Upon Tamale Tom, therefore, be the responsibility. He is able to produce the identical frock in which the Cherub arrived at his justly famous boarding house in Sailortown, and if this should not suffice, he is always ready to add stronger, if less relevant, argument.

It was during the violent, embittered days when the great shipping strike raged the length of the Atlantic coast that the Cherub appeared at Tamale Tom's, in charge of Captain Joshua Nixon, who engaged a room there, and gave out that he was looking for a berth.

The Cherub was an infinitesimal and peculiarly engaging child, with hair as sunny as her smile, and, as Joshua Nixon was known to be a widower, her presence in his company caused no surprise. Neither did the fact that he was hanging round the shipping offices for employment, as that was known to have been his principal occupation for some years, and about the only occupation he could hope for while the strike lasted.

He was following it steadily, with that pathetic hopefulness of the super-

annuated, when the identity of the Cherub suddenly became a matter of controversy among the guests of Tamale Tom. It was Jensen, the great Swede of the Bluenose barks, who first raised the question of "Where'd he get it?" that is always asked in some form when a man's right to a valuable possession becomes suspected.

Passing Joshua Nixon's room one morning, Jensen looked in to discover the old master mariner stroking his grizzled beard and knitting his bushy brows in great perplexity.

"It don't matter how carefully I dress this kid," complained Captain Nixon. "Somehow, she don't look right to me. It ain't the clothes that's wrong. I know every reef and eyebolt in the whole rig-out. And it ain't the Cherub herself—she's got lines like a cutter. But somehow it don't seem right."

Jensen hung on the door handle and shook his tawny head.

"You bane ask Mrs. Cordoba?" he inquired. The seaman's instinct is always to secure a pilot in unknown waters, and the only woman in Tamale Tom's boarding house was Tom's Irish wife. She, however, rarely emerged from the subterranean regions hallowed by her culinary triumphs, achieved in a state of perennial gratitude for having married a good Manilaman in preference to a bad "mick."

Captain Nixon shook his head in his turn. He was afraid that Mrs. Cordoba's attitude would be one of disconcerting feminine superiority, and the

idea of asking her aid when he had elected to care for the Cherub without feminine assistance was distasteful in the extreme.

They sat and stared at each other, therefore, the gaunt and grizzled captain and the little girl, and Jensen at the door ran a dubious hand through his yellow locks, until at last Joshua Nixon brought his hand down upon his knee with a resounding smack.

"Why, of course," he exclaimed, with an inspired grin, "she's starting in to grow!"

Whereat the Cherub was greatly relieved, and clapped her hands and exhibited anew all her pearly, little teeth. Most children would rather hear that they are growing tall than that they are growing good.

This happy solution, however, only led in the end to more serious difficulty. Hitherto, Joshua Nixon had replenished the Cherub's wardrobe, as to its minor contents, by the simple expedient of laying the current example of the desired garment on the counter of a suitable-looking store, and saying authoritatively, "Gimme something like that."

But the business of a new frock presented a different problem. Color, pattern, and fashion entered into the matter, as well as considerations of length.

He recalled, with a shudder, his only experiment in the fashions, resulting in the purchase of a rasping, green bonnet, in which the Cherub had sat quite still for an hour in silent suffering, until he was moved to take it off and throw it into the dock across the street.

Another inconvenient result was that he saw in the questioning blue eyes of Jensen that his title to guardianship of the Cherub was seriously impugned, and he had an uneasy feeling that it was not a subject that would bear a close investigation. He was quite relieved when Jensen stood aside to admit the shaven bullet-head and huge bovine shoulders of Tamale Tom.

The landlord held a telegram, which he handed to the captain with a certain awe. They have a profound distrust, in Sailortown, of all the landlubber ma-

chinery of civilization, and telegrams arriving for Tamale Tom's guests usually meant that some one was dying.

Joshua Nixon read it and abruptly reached for his cap.

"You got da bad-a news, no?" asked the landlord, leaning his huge bulk on the handle of the door.

But Captain Nixon was standing unusually erect.

"Not exactly, Tom," he said. "It's from the Union Transport. It don't do to be too sure, these days, but it looks like it might mean a berth."

"Dey's de folks what are shipping strike breakers up to Bridgehaven," said Tamale Tom, opening his eyes. "Alla time dey come to me for scabs."

"Are you engaging any now?" inquired the captain.

"Bigga bunch to-day," replied Tamale Tom, with a swarthy grin of satisfaction.

"Then I guess it does mean business. Look out for the Cherub till I get back."

And having bent swiftly to kiss the child, Captain Nixon sprang downstairs and out of the swing door into the street, with an alacrity he had not lately shown.

Though he would never have allowed it to be suspected, the difficulty with regard to the Cherub's wardrobe was also a financial one. Things had not gone well with Joshua Nixon for some time. A collision in his palmy days of screw freighters, in which the blame was doubtful—the one thing that was certain being that it was Captain Nixon's boat that was lost—had been followed by the wreck of his latest command, a nine-knot tramp, on the Florida keys, in a hurricane. The hint of a pursuing fate had stamped Joshua Nixon as a Jonah man. His home, and even his savings, had vanished in the long intervals between berths.

Latterly, he had been glad to drop the "captain" and pocket his ticket to earn his living as a mate; and this, too, at an age when most men had made their shore stake out of deck cargo and the like wickedness, and had retired to the rose-bowered country cottage of which every sailorman dreams.

But in spite of his age, the men at Tamale Tom's who had served under him in better days knew that Joshua Nixon was still the most conscientious of officers afloat, and the most persistent besieger of shipping offices ashore—where, alas! he had latterly spent most of his time. And if, of late, he had reason to regret the days when he wore smartly brass-edged uniforms and commanded trim freighters, he refrained from recalling them, just as he refrained from mourning audibly over the heart-breaking monotony of the replies of "Nothing to-day!" that filled his hours along the water front.

Tamale Tom and the big Swede watched him from the window until he disappeared, with energetic strides, among the warehouses. Then they turned, shaking their heads sympathetically, to the more immediate problem of the Cherub.

"And whose little gal are you, anyway?" asked Tamale Tom, sinking his huge bulk into the window seat.

"Uncle Josh's little girl," replied the Cherub promptly.

"Where he git you?" demanded Jensen.

"Out of the water," replied the Cherub, with convincing candor. "He's taking me back to papa."

"Whar your pap live?" asked Tamale Tom.

"At our house," the Cherub responded, after cogitation. "But sometimes he lives on a ship like Uncle Josh."

The men exchanged glances and shook their heads again.

"De cap's had her down to Caracas and back," said Tamale Tom. "Looks to me like it's been some shanghai job." He held out a huge hand to the expectant Cherub, and led the way downstairs.

In the little girl's eyes, Tamale Tom was a hero of delight. The power of his fist and the scars on his face gained in the quelling of many a rough-house afloat and ashore, combined with his appearance of gorillalike ferocity, and his command of strange tongues, to make him altogether a fairy-tale character.

The Cherub gleefully accompanied him to the yard of what he euphemistically described as his "hotel," where she clung tenaciously to his coat while he proceeded to enroll strike breakers for shipment to Bridgehaven.

This was a process that the Cherub found of endless interest, for on these occasions Tom sat humped over a little desk, handing out advance notes on their pay to a line of as varicolored and hard-shelled a gang of potential cutthroats as ever sought to take the places of striking dock laborers.

The provision of such forces was a regular business with Tamale Tom, and he conducted it profitably by an oft-demonstrated readiness to enforce his contracts by the strong arm. The Cherub had seen him through the door of the day room seize his stool by a leg and put to flight a gang of strikers bent on trouble, and, with a child's delight in physical prowess and general calamity, she wanted to see him do it again.

Fortune decreed, however, that the militant section of strikers should be engaged at that particular moment in an attack on the men who had taken their own places, and they could spare no time to aid their fellows in Bridgehaven. But the *Chicola* did not sail until the evening, and Tom anticipated an anxious time before his polyglot cargo was delivered f. o. b. according to his agreement. Until the strike breakers were on board the *Chicola*, Tom had not earned his money, and there were rumors that emissaries of the Bridgehaven strikers were on the water front for the purpose of stampeding them. That port was the real center of the struggle, and dynamite was not the most desperate of the methods employed by the strikers there to gain their ends.

Tom felt, as he concluded the signing on of his men, that there was something sinister in the fact that he was allowed to do so without molestation, and color was presently lent to this theory by a policeman who had been marshaling the queue outside the yard, who shouldered his way in and advised Tom in a whis-

per to scrutinize carefully the men he engaged.

"They's Havers and Clancy from Bridgehaven outside," he said, out of the corner of his mouth, "and they're telling the min that the strikers'll cut the hearts out av them as soon as they're landed. It's mighty likely they'll try to put over some funny business here."

"Maybe so," grinned the boarding-house master. "I am also a leetle to da comic myself."

"I thought I might as well tip ye off, Tom," said the policeman, half apologetically, "though I've never seen ye want help in yer business. But it's a stampede they're after pulling on yez, if it's nothing worse."

Tamale Tom put on his calico-sleeved waistcoat and sauntered forth to reconnoiter. Clancy, a heavy-jowled striker's agent, stopped in the middle of a heated harangue, expectorated carefully, and advanced up the sidewalk. His pale face was beaded with perspiration, and he gesticulated at Tom with the soft hat that he carried crumpled up in his hand.

"There's the only man that makes a profit out of it," he shouted to the strike breakers. "Here's you boys, going to get your crusts busted; there's us, starving for our rights down to Bridgehaven—"

"You look alla same wella fed," interrupted Tamale Tom. The strike breakers snickered.

"And we can starve, and youse fellers can get your crusts busted," went on Clancy fervently, "but Tom Cordoba gets his rake-off all right. It's no pipe he's sending you to, neither, even if you get to Bridgehaven at all. There ain't a whole lot left of the last ship-load he sent."

His hearers received the threat with a disposition to scoff, but some of them were obviously impressed.

"You think you're sailing in the *Chicola* to-night," added the delegate, encouraged to a parting shot, "but you'll know more about that when the time comes. You're not wanted in Bridgehaven, and you got no call to butt in. And you, Tom Cordoba, you'll be sorry

for doing this work. It's a long way to New York, but maybe we can hit you as far as that."

"Maybe I hit you first," replied Tamale Tom, advancing pleasantly. "You talka too mooch!"

But a sudden shrill cry of terror pulled him up short, and he saw Clancy's face change color as the delegate looked beyond him through the door of the yard. Attracted by the agitator's eloquence, the Cherub had crept up behind Tamale Tom in search of entertainment. When he turned round in surprise, she was in full retreat up the yard, her tiny, white stockings twinkling in terrified haste. Clancy, with dropped jaw, pointed after her.

"Where'd ye get that kid, Tom Cordoba?" he gasped, as if he had seen a specter instead of a decidedly lively little girl. "She ain't got no right here!"

"Why for no?" demanded the boarding-house master, blankly watching the flying little figure as it disappeared into the house.

Clancy viciously punched the hat that he grasped in his hand, knocked it into the road, recovered and dusted it, and placed it on his head with considerable deliberation.

"Find out! It ain't none of my business," he said gruffly, and turned on his heel.

"You coma here make trouble some more," said Tamale Tom genially, "maybe I knocka you' block off!"

Hastening to his dining room, Tom found it necessary to pull the Cherub from beneath the horsehair sofa and assure her many times that neither Clancy nor any one else would be allowed to take her away. When not only Tamale Tom, but Jensen, the Swede, Manuel, the little French engineer, and half a dozen mates and carpenters of that many-tongued company had severally promised to die in her defense, the Cherub consented to forget her scare and stay to dinner.

She was always charmed to dine with Tamale Tom when Captain Nixon was detained by business, though she could not understand half the talk of strange

adventures in stranger ports that was exchanged over the big table. The dining room itself was a museum of inexhaustible interest. The bottles on the mantelpiece, through the exiguous necks of which some magician had introduced full-rigged ships that completely filled the interior, she found purely fascinating; and the barbarous curios from many lands left on the walls by Tom's guests had each a story. Every nook and cranny of the room was populous with mummified beasts and insects. Sacrificial axes, strange seaweeds, delicate silver foliage, idols, and spears, and knobberries reached to the ceiling in profuse trophies, calling for delicious tales of blood.

Then there was always plum duff—cold, as real plum duff should always be eaten, and cut into thick, satisfactory slabs. Mrs. Cordoba's plum duff was one of the achievements that had made her name a toast in a hundred ports.

The talk was more animated than usual, owing to the machinations of Clancy among the strike breakers. A Bluenose mate had heard a rumor that an effort would be made to stampede not only Tom's men, but all the other contingents, as soon as they were assembled on board the *Chicola*. Manuel contributed a story of a plot to dislocate the steering gear. This would give the strike breakers time to go ashore and trade their advance notes, after which even Tamale Tom would have quailed at the task of rounding them up. A charmed and eloquent ship's carpenter, fresh from the Bridgehaven water front, told stories of the violence of the strikers there that opened the Cherub's blue eyes to their widest extent.

Suddenly her musical voice cut into the conversation with the clear, incisive sound of ice in a tumbler.

"Oh, what a funny way he holds his knife!" she exclaimed.

An almost palpable silence fell upon the table, while each of the guests inspected his table knife and sought covertly to examine the knife of his neighbor. Tamale Tom paused in the

process of carving a goose that swam, Manila fashion, in a sea of tomatoes and onions, to gaze blankly on Jensen, whose eyes were fixed just as dubiously on the knife he held in his huge, freckled fist. The big Swede blushed up to the roots of his yellow hair.

"Ay not bane holt my knife goot?" he stammered. And, in truth, he clasped it, point upward, in his powerful fingers, for his promotion was too recent for the jackknife habit of the forecastle to have become entirely eliminated.

"I do know," said the Cherub, a little dismayed by the sensation her criticism had produced. "I hold mine this way."

"Where you learn hold it that-a way?" Tamale Tom asked, noting the delicate poise of the baby fingers.

"I never," replied the Cherub. "I just knows."

She threw her curly head back in the short, little laugh she used to close discussions that might become inconvenient. Jensen awkwardly changed the grip on his knife, and shook his head mysteriously at the host.

"Ay tall you, that kid bane somebody, some time," he said.

"Whoever she is," said Mrs. Cordoba, entering at the moment with a load of plates, "it's high time Captain Nixon got her some new clothes."

She put the plates on the table and folded her brawny arms across her apron.

"That child's legs," she said impressively, "are going to get longer every year now for twelve years, and it's up to somebody to make her frocks keep pace with 'em. You'll find it out when you get families."

Consideration of this startling truth deprived the unmarried guests of Tamale Tom of speech until the arrival of the plum duff. With the plum duff there also arrived Joshua Nixon, master mariner. His gaunt, neatly dressed figure was very stiff and straight as he entered, and he held his gray head proudly, as if a great weight had been lifted from him. When they spoke of

the Cherub's frock, he smiled and waved a brown-paper parcel.

"She shall have all the new frocks she wants," he said. "I've brought a bunch to try on before we sail."

The guests pricked up their ears.

"I'm afraid we've got to leave you rather suddenly, Tom," explained the captain, taking his seat at the table. "The Union Transport people have offered me the *Chicola*, and I've about decided to take her."

He looked proudly round the table, and in face of that gleam in the eye and tilt of the head that spoke of a lifetime in command of men, there was not a shadow of a smile at the ingenuous pretense that a moment's consideration of the offer had been possible to him. Joshua Nixon was again captain by something more than courtesy, and there was not a seafarman among them who was not unaffectedly glad. It was not an enviable task to land a rough-necked cargo like the *Chicola's*, of course. But beggars and aged master mariners cannot be choosers.

The interest in the Cherub had become acute. Mrs. Cordoba was called in as advisory expert on the frocks, and the assembly, to a man, remained to sit around, and smoke after-dinner pipes, and discuss the garments with a gravity as supreme as that with which the Cherub tried them on. Suddenly Captain Nixon answered their unspoken questions.

"One thing I'm glad to get the *Chicola* for," he said, "is that it will take me right back to Bridgehaven. I've been trying to get back there, so I can find the Cherub's father. I guess he must have pretty well given her up for lost."

"I thought she warn't your'n, somehow," said Mrs. Cordoba. "She's a pretty child—I dare say her poor mother is crying her eyes out for her."

"I don't know," said the captain uncomfortably. "From what I can make out, she hasn't got any mother to cry for her. All I know for certain is that I was working out through the Narrows from Bridgehaven, in the old *Mary E. Leigh* last spring, and ran

down a gasoline launch. We got out a boat and picked up the Cherub and a couple of waterside roughnecks, who said they were taking her home. The kid did nothing but cry for her father, and I couldn't get much out of her, so I decided to take them along to Baltimore. The strike had delayed us too much to put back. At Baltimore we had no sooner tied up than the two roughnecks disappeared, so I sent full particulars to the harbor master at Bridgehaven."

"Why you not give da kid to da polis?" queried Tamale Tom.

"I don't trust them," replied Joshua Nixon, shaking his head with the seaman's inbred suspicion of all dry-land authority. "Maybe I'm wrong, but I mean to stick to the kid myself till I find some one with a better right. They'd probably fool away six months and find out nothing, and then send her to an orphan asylum. From what she says, her father lives in a house with a garden to it, and she has a whole raft of teddy bears to keep her company. It ain't much to go on, but I'm hoping the harbor master will have found out something. He's a personal friend of mine."

"Uncle Josh found me in the water," interposed the Cherub, with the air of illuminating the discussion. Then she twisted round in a delightfully feminine effort to inspect the fall of her skirts.

"What's her name?" suddenly inquired the carpenter from Bridgehaven.

"Doris Mills, as near as I can make out," said the captain.

The man from Bridgehaven brought his gnarled fist down upon the table with a resounding thud.

"Then, begging your pardon, you're right up against it, Captain Nixon!" he cried hoarsely. "That kid's the daughter of the man that bought up the Union Transport last year, and there's three men in jail now for shanghaeing her to make him come to terms with the strikers. And you've had her at sea all the time, and her father chasing after you like he was crazy!"

The man from Bridgehaven smote the table anew and stared round him

at the assembled company, who murmured "Aw!" in subdued chorus.

"Well, he'd have had her now if the poor old *Mary E. Leigh* hadn't piled herself on the keys," said Captain Nixon. "I don't see that I could have done any better."

"My daddy has lots of ships," said the Cherub, impressed by the general astonishment.

"I guess he has, honey," said Joshua Nixon, in a dazed way. "But I reckon when he sees you, he'll allow you haven't taken much harm."

And as to this, at least, there was general agreement.

The evening was one of exciting experience for the Cherub, quite apart from the thrilling knowledge that she was within a day's voyage of her home. First, it was necessary to assist the captain in his inspection of the *Chicola*, a rusty, battered, old freighter that trimmed by the tail more than was graceful, but, to the Cherub, a ship of beautiful adventure.

Then there was the loading of the strike breakers, strange and awesome water-front types. Having received their advance notes, and forgetting for the moment how it felt to be hungry, they were no longer so confident that they wanted to interfere in the bitter, distant quarrel of masters and men.

Tamale Tom brought up his own contingent singing, but, then, Tom always "delivered," and was the first man sought by captains to organize a pier-head jump when desertions had reduced their crews below the limit of safety. Some of the other contingents gave trouble, and one appeared to have hearkened to Clancy and his friends until it turned yellow and refused to go on board at all, joining the incensed and threatening strikers, who stood beyond the police lines and railed at the "scabs."

Climbing up to the storm-beaten bridge, a little stiffly on account of his rheumatism, Joshua Nixon felt that he had entered the fight of his life. If he delivered the strike breakers in spite of

the machinations of Clancy, he would earn the favor of the Union Transport's owners, and the Cherub's powerful father might be induced to forgive the wild-goose chase he had been led in search of his little daughter. But if he failed, the gray, old skipper felt that it would go hard with him.

Well, it was good to be back where he belonged, at any rate, with a hand on the engine-room telegraph, and the hiss of steam in his ears, and the familiar coal grits under his feet. He found a compensating thrill also in the ready deference of his chief mate. Across the harbor a trim and starchy pleasure yacht glided, her lights just beginning to blaze from big saloon ports through the gathering dusk. Her skipper was an enviable man, no doubt, surrounded by all kinds of purple and soft living, but Captain Nixon found no time to envy him just then. The strike breakers, massed forward, were evidently excited, and crowded together in bunches to argue vehemently. Having got them on board, it was his duty to keep them there.

Tamale Tom and the Bluenose mate climbed the bridge with the pilot to say farewell, and lingered a while in case their help were needed.

"For it ain't no pipe, as Clancy says, and that's a fact," said the Bluenose mate. "Tom knows the men he has signed on, but Clancy's sure to have gotten some of his men into the other gangs. You want a couple or three sure-fire bucko mates to hold this bunch on board."

"They can't get far away, once we've cast off," said the captain. "At least, not without swimming."

He snuffed the air with the desire of salt breezes. Once on the open sea, his task was all but sure of completion. It was impossible to know what schemes and fears Clancy had floated among the hundred odd waterside nondescripts who crowded the decks of the *Chicola*, but the mere fact that the strike leader had allowed half the men to board without organized opposition was in itself alarming. Joshua Nixon knew that it could not be through fear of the police.

The Bridgehaven strikers were no respecters of authority.

He had barely formulated the thought to Tamale Tom when Clancy sprang his mine. A hoarse yell from forward drew the crowd to the rail, and Tom cursed in astonishment and anger. There, standing high on the pilot house of a tug, which had crept unseen under the very nose of the *Chicola*, the strike leader stood haranguing the men at the forecastle rail, his gleaming, white face in incessant motion, his arms wildly waving, his black eyes glittering with excitement in the light of the tug's lamp.

Secure from interruption either by the police or the shipowners' men, Clancy was making his final attempt to stampede the strike breakers. It was one of those dramatic devices that had earned him his job.

"Up wit' da gangways," said Tamale Tom, hurriedly wringing the captain's hand. "Wait for not'ing—we go on shore now."

The moment they reached the wharf, Captain Nixon shouted the necessary orders. Deprived of the support of Tamale Tom, the old man had a fleeting emotion of helplessness. But in a moment, feeling the Cherub's tiny hand in his, his jaw set squarely, and his head took on its characteristic tilt. He decided that it would go hard with the first of the gang that attempted to start a stampede.

Rapidly he turned into the wheelhouse and committed the Cherub to the care of the pilot. Through the darkness the voice of Clancy floated to his ears in snatches of vague menace.

"Dynamite below, and a hoodoo skipper on deck," he was yelling. "Welcome to Bridgehaven, my lads, if ye ever get there!"

When Captain Nixon regained the bridge, the mate was in the act of driving a sullen knot of strike breakers from the forward gangway.

"Cast loose there!" shouted Captain Nixon, in his old, hurricane voice. Almost as he said it, one of the men near the gangway, a huge Portuguese, turned back in a swift, ratlike rush. In a flash

the mate was down and trampled under foot, still fighting savagely.

It was done so suddenly that for a moment Joshua Nixon clung to the bridge rail and watched the beginning of the stampede as if hardly realizing what had happened.

But only for one moment. The next, with the roar of an enraged lion, he sprang down the companion into the thick of the oncoming crowd, fighting his way in their very teeth to his prostrate officer.

"Dynamite!" came the triumphant yell of Clancy. "We'll blow the old tub to blazes!" His dim figure became momentarily convulsed with the assurance of victory, and finally vanished from the glare of the tug's lamp.

Before Captain Nixon reached the head of the gangway, a gray, old quartermaster went down before the ring-leaders of the stampede, and yelled in pain as an armored boot found his ribs. Urged on by Clancy's men, cursing and jostling in its terror, the horde jammed itself between the narrow rails of the gangway. A few, the leaders of the stampede, gained the wharf, where they were met by the silent, fighting grin of Tamale Tom.

The light of many combats blazed in Joshua Nixon's eyes. Casting off his old age and infirmities like a garment, he leaped at the struggling mass with a roar of berserk rage, tearing them apart and hurling them back one after another by main strength. A deck swab that he had seized on the way from the bridge broke on the head of a cursing Italian, and he cast the remnants in the face of the next man.

"Back, you scum!" he roared, and they shrank from the red sparks in his eyes and the voice that had commanded men before they were born. Desperation, the unthinkable idea of failure, gave him back the strength of his youth, and where his knotted fists struck, a man fell, and where he fell he lay. For a time the fear of Clancy and his dynamite was less than the fear of Joshua Nixon's anger. The wharf rats, sinking into whining obedience, and separated from their leaders, fell back and

left him in possession of the gangway, those in front recoiling on the press behind in many-voiced confusion.

Tall and gaunt, with a trickle of blood on his gray beard, the stark, old captain stood squarely over his stricken quartermaster, and, when he could no longer reach the crowd with his fists, he lashed them still farther back with his tongue. When he advanced, they retreated step for step. For a moment he had them cowed merely by his rasping speech and the tip of his extended forefinger. The foremast light's dull gleams, slanting across their staring, sullen faces as they fell away before his grizzled incarnation of outraged authority, showed that they had met their master.

And then, from the bridge, came a sound that would have thrilled the old captain on his deathbed, the wail of a child, a cry of "Uncle Josh!" And hard upon it, the voice of the pilot raised in violent expostulation.

Turning his head, he was just in time to see the Cherub, a splash of white against the darkness, vanish in the direction of the after gangway, in the arms of the huge Portuguese who had led the stampede. Two other ruffians defended the rear from the harrying attacks of the stout pilot, who cursed loudly, and loudly called for aid.

But that one cry of the Cherub's had been sufficient for Joshua Nixon. He thought no more of his ship, and forgot instantly his human cargo, now crowded forward, sullen and watchful. The Union Transport might break its own strikes for all he cared! If the *Chicola* sailed without the Cherub, he would not be the skipper who sailed her. That was the one point on which he was perfectly clear.

With an energy almost insane, he stumbled aft over the deck hamper, planting a blow with every last ounce of his flagging strength between the eyes of one of the pilot's antagonists.

Gasping and speechless, he threw himself upon the Cherub's abductor, who dropped the child and turned upon him with a grim of cruelty. Joshua Nixon felt himself seized by the throat

in an iron grip, and saw before him a dark, savage face that gnawed at a clasp knife.

Spent and dazed, he watched the dago's free hand describe a swift, gleaming circle, felt a searing like the brand of a red-hot running iron on his neck and shoulder.

The next instant the Portuguese performed a startling back somersault, alighting with a crash headfirst on the deck; and in his place, lit with the lust of battle, appeared the swarthy gorilla features of Tamale Tom.

"The kid!" whispered Captain Nixon, gazing round him like a man wakened from a nightmare.

Then the faces of Tamale Tom, the Cherub, and the Bluenose mate swam together in the haze of the masthead light and the rising mist from the harbor, and for some time Joshua Nixon was beyond the reach of any anxiety whatsoever.

When the old captain became aware of his surroundings once more, the first object that impressed itself upon his returning consciousness was a chronometer that ticked so noisily that it sounded like a pounding hammer. Next he became cognizant of satinwood paneling and a bunk, in which he was lying, edged with a polished nickel rail. Opposite was another bunk, closed and covered with maroon-velvet cushions.

Above it a deadlight looked out upon a snowy, sunlit deck, and a section of steamer rail bright with new enamel, whereon there hung a buoy with the name "Doris" in black letters. A clean-looking steward in smart ducks was regarding him sympathetically.

"What the——" said Captain Nixon, and halted with an exclamation of pain. It became plain that he would not have to turn his head. He gazed sideways at the steward with a certain suspicion.

"What's all the fuss about?" he said, after prolonged reflection.

"All right, captain!" was the steward's enigmatical assurance. "You ain't got to move. You been hurt."

"What boat's this?" asked the captain, after he had drunk something fizzy

that the man pressed upon him with an air of authority.

"Yacht *Doris*, owner E. Robertson Mills, of Newport," replied the steward glibly.

Captain Nixon closed his eyes, and for some time tried to recall the significance of the name.

When he opened them some hours later, a big man with a hard, insolent eye and a bulbous, red nose was watching him from the cushioned bunk; and on his knee, resplendent in the daintiest and most expensive of new frocks, her blue eyes blinking in the sunlight that streamed in at the porthole, the Cherub sat, a veritable vision of delight.

"Hello, Uncle Josh!" she hailed him gleefully.

"Well, a nice mess you've made of things!" barked the big man.

Captain Nixon said something about being due to get back to his ship.

"No, you won't," returned the big man in the same barking manner. "I've been chasing you the whole length of the Atlantic coast and back, and there's a lot of things I want explained first. The *Chicola* don't need you. I'm principal owner, and I ought to know. For one thing, she sailed last night. For another, you're much too old for that work. If they hire any more like you, I'll not only fire them, but I'll fire the man that hires them. I've just been telling them so at the office."

He ended with a louder bark, nodded several times, and frowned fiercely.

"And I'll have Clancy and every man jack of his child-stealing gang in jail

before I'm through with this strike," he added.

"This is going to be your cabin, Uncle Josh," blurted the Cherub enthusiastically. She had been patently loaded with startling information all the time. "Do you like the room we've given you?"

Joshua Nixon turned a pathetic gaze upon her father.

"I've got to go back to Tamale Tom's, honey, and get another berth," he replied, in a whisper.

"No," asserted the Cherub, shaking her curls decidedly. "You are to stay with us. Papa says you are to be my captain."

Joshua Nixon looked at her father again, and something in his eyes made the big man turn his head away and bark more fiercely than ever.

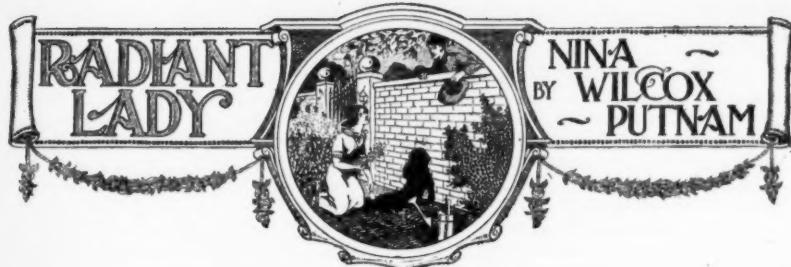
"Well, the appointment's a bit premature," he said, "seeing that I haven't finished pensioning off her last nominee. But it's her boat, and I guess that what she says will have to go."

He deposited the Cherub on the cushions and moved to the door.

"By the way, Captain Nixon," he added, in an altered voice, "I learn that you jumped from the rail of the *Mary E. Leigh* in the dark to pull my little girl out of the water. Ahem! That would have been a grave risk for a much younger person. Captain Nixon, I am a man of damned few words. I thank you!"

And before the bewildered captain could reply, the cabin door closed, and he was alone with his new owner.





THE young minister had refused her invitation to remain for supper. This was the fourth time he had done so, and it was with slow, disheartened step that Araminta crossed to the little stone seat at the far end of her garden, and sat herself down to think the situation over. Under one slender, earth-stained hand lay the "Tract on Temperance," which he had forgotten in the formal haste of his departure; and Araminta's supple fingers caressed it unconsciously, the rest of her body immovable, her sleek head bent in the sunlight.

Araminta had never had a lover; and until now it mattered little, for she had not thought of one—much. Of course, there used to be Joey, the gardener's boy, who had interested her at the age of seven; and the Groton boy, who used to sit across the aisle in church at holiday time; and then the young man who married her Cousin Kate, after all—but these were mere shadows, half-formulated fancies to be blushed over and consigned to oblivion. No one had really mattered until now. And now it mattered terribly.

A golden-armored bee boomed about the prim ruffle of her gown in search of the illusive scent of lavender it held; but Araminta did not move, and presently it went away and lit upon one of a row of gaudy nasturtiums which lined the pebbled path. A light breeze sprang up and swayed the hollyhocks, so that they whispered to each other as they brushed the mellow brick of the high garden wall. It was a sound Araminta

loved to hear, but this afternoon she did not listen. Instead, she let her head drop farther down upon her breast, till the smooth, tightly coiled crown of it gleamed palely in the full sun, and the self-thrown shadow hid her face. Then her hands fastened tightly upon the tract, and she sat so still that a bluebird came and perched upon the sundial not two feet away, making his shrieking complaint unheeded, and unafeard.

Yes, it mattered vitally this time. How quickly he had gone; it was scarcely courteous! And the visit itself was only a parish one, and perforce. Had he fled for very fear of her? Had she let him see the light in her eyes, and had he been terrified thereby? No, no! Surely not that! Her eyes had been downcast and modest! Oh, the agony of supposing that he had guessed her hopeless and unwelcome love! Why should she hope that he would care? He had never looked at her; no one had ever looked at her, not even Joey; and she was almost thirty now—an old maid!

While the minister, at thirty-three, was an eligible young man. What did girls do to attract men? If her mother had lived, she might have told what had attracted her father. Surely no breach of the most sacred covenant, this! Or, if her father had lived, he might have told. For asking a girl friend would border on immodest curiosity! After all, perhaps it was as well that there was no one to ask, for probably nice girls did nothing at all, but sat with folded hands and downcast eyes, waiting, waiting, waiting, ah, so long!

Over the heliotrope bed, two butterflies, rapturous, quivering, tremulous with love and the brevity of life, arose in a colorful, whirling nuptial flight. From the gnarled old apple tree, with its intertwining, caressing limbs, came the song of a robin, who saw that the sun had passed the meridian, and began her call of "*Come home, come home!*"

Perhaps another time the minister would remain to supper. After all, his excuse had been a good one, and the excitement incident to it might in some degree account for his unseeing manner toward her. Indeed, it is not every day that one is robbed, and in the very center of the village street, at that! To be spoken to by a great gypsy man, to bespeak him kindly, and then to have the villain make off with one's watch—a valued heirloom, too—is something well calculated to upset the calmest of men. Especially as the hue and cry which followed had been utterly unsuccessful, and the fellow had got away!

All this had happened to the young minister that very day. Indeed, the whole subject of his conversation had been concerning it. He had remained just about long enough to recount the adventure, and then taken his departure on the grounds that the thief might have been caught, and his presence, as complainant, needed. Oh, it was a very good excuse, and she sympathized deeply with his agitation at the loss of the watch. But there was more, far more, reason for his going. *He had not wanted to stay!* And there was no use in fooling oneself about the fact!

A tiny red squirrel came out upon the upper ledge of the summerhouse. It sat there, motionless, until a second squirrel appeared in hot haste and started a pursuit which buried both creatures in the tangle of rose vine on the roof.

"I'm sure they do something to attract the men!" said Araminta, aloud. "I wonder what?"

"They run away!" said a voice from the top of the wall.

"They run—what? My goodness!" cried Araminta, looking up in astonishment.

There, on the top of the west wall, sat a man; a sort of glorified man in strangely colored garments. His tawny head was silhouetted against the sapphire sky, and the sun seemed to strike fire from the lobes of his ears, as though burnished metal was fastened in them. He was hatless and dusty, but the youth and vitality which radiated from him were disarming, especially when it concentrated in a smile of exceeding whiteness. Nevertheless, Araminta sprang to her feet and gathered up her skirts in preparation for flight. The man gave a laugh—a strangely pleasant laugh to hear—and Araminta began to move swiftly.

"Oh! Don't do that!" cried the man. "You be attractive enough without!"

Araminta stopped short, her heart beating wildly. What should she do? The man could have no very evil intent, since his voice rang so clear and merry! Perhaps she had better face him. When she did so, the lovely color had mounted in her usually pale cheeks.

"What do you want?" she demanded tremulously.

"Look about you!" he answered, waving his hand airily. "Look at all the loveliness here, and ask again! I wants to come into it—and who would not?"

"My garden?" she exclaimed incredulously. "But—but there is a gate on the other side, and I—I do not know you!"

With a graceful leap he was in the inclosure, and, smiling still, came a little way toward her.

"Doesn't you know me?" he asked, laughter lighting his eyes. "Well, I don't know you; but we will both take the risk, eh?"

The very audacity of it left her dumb.

"Beside," continued the man, "if I stay a while, then we will know each other."

"But—but how do you know that I will want you in my garden?" demanded Araminta, advancing a step.

"How do you know that I will want to stay?" he flashed, with another

smile. "Ah, but you *do* know, oh, radiant lady!"

Calmly he took two steps backward, paused for a moment as though to listen intently; and failing to hear that for which he listened, sat himself upon the stone bench, his head against the wall, and motioned her to do likewise. Very much against her will, yet irresistibly drawn, Araminta obeyed, taking the far end.

"I suppose I ought to scream for help," she said weakly, "but, somehow, I can't feel that it is necessary."

"Scream for help!" he exclaimed. "Oh! Don't do that. It would kill the little young rounce before it is born. Please don't scream for help. I like you better alone!"

There was a moment of silence.

"What is your name?" she asked suddenly.

"Oh, timid fawn!" he replied. "You will know me no better when I says it. But if you wish, my name is Prometheus."

"He was a god," Araminta said.

"Was he?" asked the visitor. "I know the name has to do with the sun; and I am a sun fellow, and no mistake!"

"I love the sun, too," said Araminta.

"Do you dance in it?" asked Prometheus.

"Dance—why, no! Why should I?"

"So that it may caress you!" he exclaimed. "See, like this! You turn your back and then your breast, and throw out your arms to him. I dance often in the sun. Come, I will show you."

He took her by the hand.

"But no! But—" protested Araminta, but futilely.

The supple strength of his hand had pulled her sharply to her feet, and unavoidably she tripped toward him a pace or two.

"Too slow, too slow!" he cried. "You must dance faster."

And seizing her about the waist, he whirled her around in a mad measure, which landed them both, breathless, on the little space of lawn about the sundial.

"That's fine!" he panted. "Sit here and take breath. The grass is much better than the hard stone. Did you like it? Will you dance each day, now?"

"How dare you! Oh! My hair!" cried Araminta, with flushed cheeks, trying hard to be very angry—and failing utterly.

What witchery the man had! Lying at her feet, he stared up at her with laughing eyes, and put a detaining hand on hers as she lifted it to her head.

"Don't!" said he. "It looks better windblown. Don't tidy your hair so much, don't tidy your life so much. Mess it up by dancing sometimes!"

"It is wonderful to dance so!" said Araminta reluctantly; but, somehow, forgetting to even try being angry. "It makes you feel—glorious! I never really danced before, I think."

She broke off abruptly, for he kept looking up at her and smiling—a strange, meaningful smile, very arresting and magnetic.

"You are very beautiful," he said softly.

Araminta flushed again, a queer sensation tingling through her veins. But she pretended not to hear, and, turning away her head, affected to examine the petunia bed. Something stirred in its scented depths.

"There is that wretched little rabbit—he eats up *everything!*" she cried, pointing. "If only I could catch him! But I hate a trap or a gun."

"But I will catch him!" said the man, springing up and darting over to the petunias. In another moment he was back, holding the soft, little creature aloft by the ears. He sank back to his place upon the sward, and held it up for her inspection.

"Mercy!" squealed Araminta. "How could you? How wonderful!"

"The Romans, my people, call them 'ear fellows,'" he told her solemnly. "That is because of the great length of ears. See his heart beat? That is because he fears you. Me he fears not. Will I put him over the wall, or are you goin' to change your mind and let him eat part of your garden?"

"Let him stay!" said Araminta. "There are flowers enough for two."

Prometheus released the little animal, letting it down gently, and together they watched it scamper away into the shrubbery, whence came a sound as of two creatures.

"Hum!" said the man. "Enough flowers for three, or, maybe, more. Doubtless he has a wife."

Araminta said nothing.

"Lean your head back so, against the time stone," suggested Prometheus, noting that she sat uncomfortably. "That is much better, eh? Do you love the wind? If you lie so, it will put its soft fingers about your throat! Ah! But you wear a collar! Is it not hot and uncomfortable?"

"Yes, rather," she answered him.

"Then why do you wear it?" he queried, in evident surprise.

"Why—because people do wear collars, I suppose," she said.

"Take it off!" he begged. "See, I wear no collar, and *I*, too, am a person. It is silly to wear a thing which is uncomfortable."

"I suppose it is," admitted Araminta, with busy fingers.

The bit of stiffly starched linen was in one hand now, and, with the other, she covered the band at her neck.

"But—but what shall I wear instead?" she pleaded. "I can't go—even you would not want—"

He took the collar from her, and put it on top of the dial. Then he regarded her critically.

"Turn in the other part, so that it is a little lower," he advised, "and I will make you a garland to trim yourself with."

"A garland!" ejaculated Araminta, laughing nervously, but delightedly. "Why, I never wore a garland!"

"But you have made garlands grow," said he. "My people always make garlands. Turn in the neck of your *bokda*."

Under the spell of his marvelous personality, Araminta obeyed; actually obeyed, until the soft, white V at the base of her throat was laid bare. Then

she watched, entranced, as he brought poppies with full hands, and, lying upon his back, began twisting their stems together with skilled fingers. And, as he wove, he sang a strange little minor melody, while the world seemed to fade away, leaving them on some Elysian hillside, spirits of youth, glad of life, and thinking only of the sun, and wind, and the rosy garland. Once there came a murmur as of many distant, angry voices, borne in upon the breeze, and, at the sound, they sat alert, tense, a look coming into the man's eyes as of a startled wild thing that hears the hunter. And the woman also listened painfully to she knew not what, infected by his emotion.

Then the sound passed, and, with its going, the smile crept back to the corners of his mouth, and the song continued unbroken, until it and the garland both were finished. Then he flung the silken blossoms about her shoulders, and, taking both her hands in his, drew her toward him.

"Who is your lover?" he asked.

"I have no lover," she answered him. Why did she tremble so? Prometheus drew her nearer still, and, somehow, her will to resist left her, and she forgot everything except the strength and beauty of him. There was a warm perfume to him, like the heat of a sun-kissed meadow. His hands were brown and strong, and stained with poppy juice.

"No lover?" he questioned softly.

"Alas!" she said, smiling.

"But you are very beautiful," he said again.

"Beautiful!" This time her heart leaped at the word.

"Oh, no!" she murmured. "I am not, you, that is, if only I were——"

He put both her hands in one of his, and, holding them firmly, reached up with a swift motion and pulled out the two great pins of shell which held her pale hair so snugly. Then a miracle took place. All about her fell the shining masses, wave on wave, till it covered her shoulders and her narrow waist, and even tumbled upon the grass, glinting and glimmering in the dying

sun. A new breeze, sprung up as though on purpose to disport itself with her tresses, whipped it into a thousand ringlets, and laid a burnished strand across the man's mouth. How the little tendrils curled among the poppies on her breast; the crimson poppies, whose color was reflected now in her cheeks and lips. Between the parted ivory of her teeth, her breath came sharply.

"Why, oh, why did you so?" she cried. "Why do you mock me, and pull about my hair? I am not beautiful, I have never been beautiful! Why do you mock me? You are cruel, cruel!"

He kissed the strand upon his lips, and laid it gently upon her shoulder. Then he sprang to his feet, still keeping her hands.

"Not beautiful?" he cried derisively. "Oh, Radiant Lady! Not beautiful? Ha! ha! Come with me!"

Blindly, stumblingly she obeyed, her hands in his, one pace behind him all across the garden, between the nodding clematis, past the clutching rose sprays, to where the lily pool gleamed blue and clear under the evening sky. Tall iris blossomed at its edge, and, pushing these aside, he made her kneel at the margin, and, stooping beside her, bade her look. And with sweet wonder in her eyes, Araminta did as she was bidden.

There, in the still depth of the pond, was the vast sky, all clear, clear, and pulsing with light. A bird soared high, a mere speck, placed by the Master Hand to measure infinity by; and mirrored against the whole was the golden-haired vision which, up to now, none but the secret mirror and candle of Araminta's chamber had known. Gone was the sleek, prim little head, the pale face, blanched for fear of impropriety; and, in its stead, a maid uncoiffured, free-throated, garlanded—a thing of beauty, flushed with pleasure, and, beside her, a brown-skinned god, whose jeweled ears seemed pointed at the tips.

And as she looked, the god gathered up a great handful of her hair, and drew her nearer, nearer, as they knelt, until his breath was hot upon her cheek, until— Ah, how the skies trembled

in the depths of that pool! Nearer and nearer—

Then came a sudden, sharp rapping at the garden door, and the spell snapped as by a hammer stroke from Jove. Man and maiden once more, they sprang apart, and Prometheus arose in haste.

"The sun has set!" he cried. "I must be gone!"

"No! No!" she wailed.

The knocking came again, louder.

"Yes, I must," he answered breathlessly. "It is no longer safe here. Outside, they cannot catch me, now that I have rested. But here is a token. Keep it, that you may remember me."

Into her unresisting hand he pressed some object, and, with a bound, gained the wall's summit, where he had entered. Then, with a gracefully tossed kiss, he vanished as abruptly and silently as he had come.

Dazed and bewildered, Araminta stood, staring at the spot where he had been a moment since. She was a naiad still, wind-blown and flower-decked, and it seemed incredible that the brown god was no longer with her. Then the knocking at the green wooden gate becoming more persistent than ever, she crossed the garden as though in a dream, and opened it. On the threshold stood the young minister.

"I believe I left my 'Tract on Temperance,'" he began hurriedly.

Then he looked squarely at Araminta and stopped. Next, he closed the gate behind him, and looked again, an unfamiliar, *seeing* expression coming into his eyes.

"I left, I left—that is, I've come back—" he stammered.

"Yes," said Araminta, not realizing, "you left it on the bench. Over there."

The young minister walked stumblingly to where the book lay; walked unsteadily back to where Araminta stood in her golden, flowery glory, and paused before her, the nervous color mounting in his clear, boyish face as he spoke.

"It wasn't only for the tract that I came," he began lamely. "That is to

say, it was, but it isn't now—I mean, if I might be allowed to change my mind about supper—you see, they didn't catch the thief, after all, and I could remain. *Please, Miss Araminta.*"

"Yes?" said Araminta, moving off a little.

The young minister followed her closely.

"Oh, don't run away," he exclaimed anxiously. "My dearest Lady—Araminta! May I stay? I have something particular to say to you!"

Then slowly the meaning of his words worked its way into Araminta's

dazed understanding; and a wonderful smile lit up her face, making it more beautiful than all the past hours had done.

"Yes, Alexander, you may stay," she said, and held out her hand.

Simultaneously they realized for the first time that she held something in it—the gypsy's parting token.

"*What?*" exclaimed the young minister, pointing to it excitedly.

Araminta gave a little scream, and held the object up to view.

It was the young minister's gold watch.



JANE LISTER—DEAR CHILDE

COOl in the cloistered walk,
And kissed by English winds,
So mute amid the whispering leaves, the birds' glad talk,
What is it the traveler finds?

A tremulous dear name
Writ in the ancient stone,
And sounding sweet to-day as when They, sorrowing, came
Who chose it for her own.

Jane Lister, the dear childe,
The little English maid—
A baby heart, unlearnèd, rosy sweet and wild,
Two soft feet unafraid

Before that dreaded bound
Where grave men search in vain.
She steps, years after, through our faithful daily round
With immemorial pain.

For we are mothers all
And hold a trembling bliss—
Cradles, and lesson time, dear bodies growing tall,
The warm and fleeting kiss.

And vain it is to slip
Fond arms about our joy—
The Change so soon hath welcomed each upon the lip—
Fair girl and rosy boy.

MILDRED MCNEAL SWEENEY.

THE MYSTERY OF CHARM

EDGAR SALTUS

WHAT has impressed you most on this side of the water?" a local reporter asked a foreigner. "The universal rudeness," the latter replied.

But rudeness is like art, it has no frontiers. If it exists hereabouts, it exists elsewhere. In London it is rather good form to be rude. Berlin long since discovered that an ounce of insolence is worth a pound of Ollendorf. In Paris politeness is an extra that is charged in the bill. Even in Madrid, where highwaymen still address their prey as Your Grace, even there, courtesy is otherwise scanty.

Rudeness is not, therefore, a cislantic monopoly. In the savannahs, in the sierras, along the bayous, farther yet, in the pampas of the Argentine, and the glittering peace of the Cordilleras, occasionally there may be the gleam of quick knives, there is also occasional civility.

That is not all. In New York, Chicago, San Francisco, the floorwalkers of the department stores are models of the most perfect deportment. Then, also, in the Tombs recently, a colored felon, apparently black as the ace of spades, yet who, none the less, had been taken red-handed, referred to a fellow felon, blacker if possible, and more red-handed than he, as "that other gentleman."

Courtesy could go no farther. The foreigner was, therefore, wrong. Rudeness is not universal here, and if civility

is not either, it is for an excellent reason. There is among us none of that dissimulation from which effete suavity proceeds. As a nation, we are frank and forward. We keep abreast, when not ahead, of everybody. English cookery is the worst in Europe. American cookery is the worst in the world. There is real supremacy. Moreover, we produce everything, including panics, and raise everything except hexameters. In spite of which, or, perhaps, precisely on that account, we have the defects of our qualities. We do not generally set out to please.

Perhaps that is what the foreigner meant. But to please is an art of which the mere technique is so volatile that it must be inhaled. It is an art which has mysteries that are penetrable only after novitiates patient and prolonged. It is an art which, once apprehended, may take you anywhere, bring you all things, seat you where you wish. But it is an art known only to the few. Rarely is the veil of it lifted.

Aspirants must have predisposing gifts. They must have health, happiness, humor. With these attributes they may succeed, but only on condition that they do not try to. It is very pernicious to think that effort is helpful. In effort is failure. The proper effect must, like repartee, be spontaneous. It must be radiated, like light and like love. There must be no effort about it. Lucretius understood that. "Try to please," he said, "and you are

lost." With effort and energy, one may become almost anything, and remain a tedious person. The most tiresome people it is possible to meet are precisely those who are full of effort and energy. If you want to please you must be different. To that end, intensify your individuality. If you have no individuality, cultivate one.

You may be told that it is better to have a regular income. That is a very sordid view. Investments in the prose of life yield only dullness. You talk platitudes instead of subtleties, and degenerate into a mere man of means. But, given the ability to please, and though you have nothing, you may have everything. There are young people naturally charming, who might have that and more. Before the opportunity occurs, they are given what is called a thorough education, and no description of it could be falser. The only things worth knowing are the things that cannot be taught. The art of pleasing is one of them. It has, though, its apprehensible elements. But these are never expounded in the schools, the result being that young people, otherwise promising, fail to realize that their first duty in life is to please. What their second is, we have yet to discover.

The rudiments are more apparent. In considering them, it should be noted that sorrow is always a passage to a lesser perfection. Whether you like it or not, you must be happy. Nothing, except disease and genius, can hinder you more than potpourris of melancholy airs. If you wish people to welcome you, get them to tell you their troubles. If you wish them to avoid you, tell them your own. Better still, do not have any. During the mad days of the Red Terror, a great lady went to the guillotine smelling a rose. That is the proper attitude. Should the picture of it not inspire, then consider one of Whistler. His creditors offered to accept thirteen and six in the pound. Whistler refused. They offered to take twelve. Whistler again refused. "But, sir," one of them expostulated, "we are trying to get you out of your troubles." "My troubles!" Whistler ex-

claimed. "My troubles, did I understand you to say? Why, good Lord, sir! They are not my troubles, they are yours!"

That, while wickedly witty, was not the proper attitude, not ethically at least, though artistically it was the proper spirit. Let the other man worry. Do not do so yourself. Do not do so, that is, if you want to be happy. You cannot please even yourself unless you are.

But what is happiness? Heine said it consisted in being happy. It were difficult to be more profound, yet the dictionary appears to have succeeded. The dictionary says that happiness is a state of good fortune. Tastes differ. There was once a satrap whose good fortune was such that he had everything in sight, and out of it, except happiness itself. To acquire it, he was advised to get and wear the coat of a happy man. But you know the story. You know that when at last the happy man was found, it was found, too, that he was coatless. From which you may see not only how tastes differ, but how useful dictionaries are.

But these are laborious thoughts. Besides, if happiness is not a state of fortune, good or bad, it must be something else. Hugo, always magnificent, said it was a banquet. Hugo awoke each morning drunk, as a poet should be, with the nectar he had sipped in dream. Another poet declared that dreams are true while they last. If you can but contrive to live in them, there is happiness, there is the feast.

Practical people will object that dreams are but the odors of the festival, the aroma of the repast, that the real banquet has a solid basis, and that basis, expressed in one word, is wealth. But practical people recognize only the obvious, and that is very misleading. Misfortune, which is always jealous of the favored, may strike and divest the rich. No one can strip a naked man. For which reason, perhaps, unless it be for another, the gayest people on our visiting list are paupers, and the glummest are plutocrats. Money is not happiness expressed in a word, though lack of it may be unhappiness expressed in three.

May be, we say, for it all depends on the point of view, and it is, perhaps, simply in the point of view that happiness consists.

In any event, if you want to please, you have got to be happy. But not too happy. There is nothing more melancholy than people who are always gay. It is not only melancholy, it is dangerous. According to the best opinions, continuous high spirits, constant optimism, the ability to accept anything and everything with a smile, constitute a pathological condition which is symptomatic of general paralysis. Don't be too gay, therefore, unless, indeed, it is your great good luck to be still a child. Children laugh for no reason, and what better reason could there be? But the laughter which is gracious in childhood is not becoming in age. No emotion is—*sæve joy*, for that is always serene.

Be serene, therefore. Leave laughter to others, but excite it if you can. People generally do not care for heavy views on light subjects. On heavy subjects they prefer light views. It is advantageous to provide them, easy as well, for humor is merely common sense in fancy dress. In that costume one can go anywhere. With it, any situation may be saved. Had Helen of Troy possessed it, the war of the world would not have been fought. Yet, what the lady lacked in humor she made up in Homer. The bard so dressed her in blood and beauty that we forget she was not a wit. We remember, though, that Theseus was not either. When he was saying good-by to Ariadne, he might have made her laugh instead of cry, had he asked her to forgive the liberty he was taking.

Humor is, therefore, advisable. So, also, is tact. Humor saves situations, tact prevents mistakes. It is painful for people to be misunderstood. To be understood is often still more so. Tact is the one pilot that can steer you through that channel.

Be tactful, therefore. It is easy enough when you know how, and seems easier still when you don't. Yet the secret of it is but a bundle of mixed negatives. Tactful people do not con-

tend, they concede. They do not complain, they console. They are not emphatic. They do not interfere. They never argue, they never explain, they never disappoint, they never tell a lie, or, if they do, they stick to it.

Therein are the lesser mysteries of this art. They enlighten the neophyte without perfecting the adept. They will not serve to pass you initiate into the art itself. They disclose what you should be, not what you should do. They provide no criterion whereby you may at once decide whether an action is, or is not, pleasing.

In search of that criterion, the philosophic and the polite have equally groped. Generally, they have agreed that the test of an action consists in its results. If the results are agreeable, so is the action. If the results are disagreeable, the action is also. But that is merely beating about the bush, and, besides, here again, tastes differ. The humor that amuses you may annoy your neighbor. A man's happiness is not always a joy unto his wife. In one woman's tact there may be a sister's discomfiture. And so on, *da capo*, *vice versa*, *ad infinitum*. Moreover, admitting even, as is, perhaps, permissible, that agreeable things are agreeable, and disagreeable things the reverse, such occultism, however profound, will not lead the neophyte to the seats where sit the *sunetoi*, the *di color che sanno*, that is to say, the connoisseurs, the initiate, the masters of what's what.

To climb to their high seats there must be light from above, and, here, from the heights it comes, refracted from crystal parapets where once was unending spring, eternal youth, immortal beauty, the harmonies of divine honeymoons, the bliss of a golden dream which radiant goddesses and resplendent gods shared ideally.

In words of tormented polish, poets certify that into these extraordinary felicities an ordinary brute brought discord. Caught, flayed, his tendons torn from him, these tendons were turned into the strings of a harp, and at once from discord came harmony.

All this happened a long time ago,

and probably never happened at all. But the beauty of the truth of it is irrefragible. In the panorama disclosed, you see harmony disrupted by discord, you see discord ousted and harmony restored. It is, perhaps, demonstrable, therefore, that could discord be eliminated from the scheme of things, Utopia would cease to be utopian. In any event, it follows, or seems to follow, that the test of an action consists in its assonance or its dissonance, and that, according as it conduces to harmony or to discord, so does it attract or repel. By the same token it becomes rather clear that, were the validity of the test generally recognized, and, in being recognized, adopted, no one could again accuse us of rudeness, for we should then all omit to do anything that could fail to please.

There, at any rate, is the criterion for which the philosophic and the polite have equally groped, and which it is our mere duty to supply. While we are at it, we will supply something else. We scorn to have a secret from our readers. For there is a secret, a deeper mystery, an inner shrine.

By way of prelude, it may be remembered that a long time ago, at an epoch when the world was too leisurely to be progressive, and too ornate to be rude, there were schools where girls were taught how to be charming. The graduates are said to have been admirable. But it is said, too, that they were admired less for their beauty, which must have been admirable also, than because their study of every grace had enabled them to display in the art of pleasing a *maestria* that was almost perfect. Almost, but not quite. To them still the

inner shrine was hidden. But to those who had not only studied, but meditated, to such as they the veil was lifted, and they saw that, while beauty may attract and graciousness detain, yet to please generally is not to please profoundly, and that they alone do both who put their vibrations in tune with the vibrations of others.

There it is. To vary with another's varying moods, to be not only gracious, but intuitive, not merely attractive but sympathetic, to feel as others feel, to put yourself in their place, to rise with their rising and with them subside—in the ability to do that is the great secret, the only secret of all. It is the core of the law of harmonies, the impalpable but prodigious quintessence of charm.

Neophytes may have the soul of Chopin, the manners of Chesterfield, the wealth of Cresus; if they lack that, neophytes they will remain. If they possess it, then, in their company, poets lose their abashment, thugs feel at home, kings are at ease, wild beasts become tame. Even in the limits of this paragraph there are no limits to what they may attain.

In default of it, there are always consolation prizes for those who succeed in doing what deserves to be written, for those also who succeed in writing what deserves to be read. Moreover, apart from such necromancy, and in spite, too, of an incivility that is becoming, perhaps, rather generally diffused, the world is full of delightful people, whom the majority of us never meet, unless, indeed, we seek them in fairy tales that are out of print, in ballets that are out of date. For in these, also, is contained the simple secret of charming.





III.—A MATTER OF STANDARD

Look at the woman here with the new soul,
Fresh upon her lips
Alit, the visionary butterfly
Waiting my word to enter to make bright,
Or flutter off and leave all blank as first.—*Pippa Passes.*

VERY few beautiful things came into Olaf Nilsson's life—very few beautiful real things, that is. His violin gave to him many lovely illusions born of the delicate tones that a great German master had taught him how to produce. And the poet's soul, unquenchable within him, showed him other fair things—a glimpse of sunset red over the gray and smoke-wreathed roof tops on which his window looked; a spray of fresh green in the square just a block or two beyond; sometimes a flight of birds; on hot nights the cooling splendor of the moon. Oh, yes—these sweet, chary beauties of the city were his; to no man were they more free. But extraneous beauty, beauty that other people called beauty—the graces of life, the charms of women, the color and magic of things—these stayed afar from Olaf Nilsson like the Blue Bird of Happiness.

He was of the fiber of which artists are made—artists in life, as well as in art. Under different conditions he could have appreciated the poetry of perfect food, and the harmony of rich surroundings. As things were, he rarely had enough to eat, and he lived

in one of the cheapest upper rooms of Mrs. Levinsky's cheap lodging house. Fate is curiously wasteful in this fashion—or is it willful wantonness? Does she, indeed, find a malicious content in gathering walnuts for the toothless, and feeding dyspeptics with cakes and ale? The cheap attic room would have done quite well enough for Mr. Goldrocks, who was losing his eyesight, and had a fad against a temperature above fifty. And Olaf Nilsson could have got drunk on Mr. Goldrocks' Gobelin tapestries and the sweet, languorous breath from his conservatories. So much for Fate, the only lady with a sense of humor, and a bitter humor at that! In a mood even more freakish and more intentionally heartless than usual, she brought Pippa Carpenter into Olaf Nilsson's gray life—a life in which the only color came from the paint box of dreams.

Mrs. Carpenter was a woman whom no man could describe ten minutes after he had met her. He would have no idea whether she was short or tall; he would not know how old she was; he could not tell the color of her eyes. The masculine being did not live who could note definitely the way she did her hair, or the kind of clothes she wore. But

every man, married or unmarried, young or old, amorous or ascetic, could remember the curious timbre of her voice, with its elusive foreign intonation; the way her red mouth drooped at the corners, as if a sort of weariness of the spirit clung to it; and the marvelous, deep red of her hair. Such hair!—with tones as rich as wine, and as soft as autumn leaves. Her eyes, as a matter of fact, were gray with a purple glamour about them somehow, but all that the man she was talking to ever recalled about them was their curiously sweet, deep look—which always gave him the fatuous impression that she was really and for the first time studying a Kindred Soul.

She liked Olaf Nilsson, from the first day she met him on Mrs. Levinsky's ramshackle stairs. She had gone there on one of her restless, impulsive visits of benevolence. Like most unsatisfied women, she filled her life with a thousand interests, and chief among them was the interest in other women, an almost passionate wish to protect them from sundry buffets of outrageous fortune which, along with some unessential material luxuries, had been her own portion. She was always seeking out obscure sisters who were in precarious situations, and giving them the one little tug needed to keep them from going fairly over the precipice. She had come to the dingy lodging house on some such errand. The girl she came to see was sordid and unappreciative, but Pippa came several times persistently—and, after she had met Olaf Nilsson, and grown to know him in a swift, bohemian fashion, she came oftener, and even stopped sometimes at his studio. There were advantages in having no longer a conventional reputation to lose.

Olaf Nilsson had a poet's face, dreamy, yet not effeminate, topped by a mane of flaxen-fair hair, and starred by eyes as blue as his own mountain lakes. He was from far Norway, and something of the brooding poetry and mysticisms of his country lingered in his rathé, wistful smile.

"What a boy!" said Philippa Car-

penter to her heart. "What an exquisite, hopeful, wonderful boy!"

They talked together like old friends—odd talk that leaped across formal preliminaries, and went at once to the heart of the things for which they both cared. He told her his brief and simple history, and it was touching to note that to him it seemed neither brief nor simple. He dwelt on the early childhood memories quite seriously and reverently; his account of how the great German musician had carried him away to Munich to study was palpably to him the recital of a miracle. Those years in the German city, days of work and ambition, and a few friends—years that a less ingenuous youth would have dismissed in a few casual words—he described breathlessly. To him they had been notable, magical, not comparable to any other's experiences.

Then there was America, where he had had such fair prospects, and where he had been so sure of making his fortune and bringing the world to his feet. Here again he was absurdly, touchingly intense. There was no lack of courage in him, but there was an almost too poignant realization of failure and disappointment. As his days of study in Munich had comprised for him all hope and glamorous ambition, so his year in America spelled for him the whole of the limitless tragedy of defeated genius. He had gone down into the depths, he and his passionate intensity of soul, and he had come back with the exaltation of suffering glimmering about him like a nimbus. His face had become etherealized, his look was fanatical, abstracted. And he had written a symphony. It was a tragical symphony—that of course. With the egotism which is too simple to be arrogant, he had called it "*Geistschmerz*"—"Soul Pain"—and doubtless he believed that in its poignant harmonies he had for the first time voiced the anguish of humanity that is broken on the wheel.

One day he told Mrs. Carpenter that he had sent his symphony to the director of a great orchestra famous on two continents. So might a Japanese father speak of sending his son to war,

or a mother announce the marriage of a beloved daughter. Both pain and heartbroken ecstasy filled him. His blue eyes were full of hot tears. The beloved thing, the music into which he had poured himself and his dreams, all that he was and wished to be, had left him, had spread great, shining wings and flown into the storm of the world. What would be its fate? Yet he never really doubted that it would be received with reverence and honor. It was a great symphony—so he believed it. Why should not the world be glad to get it, and grateful to him for making so beautiful a thing?

But Pippa's heart ached for him.

"It is very difficult to get a symphony performed by that orchestra," she said to him gently. "Many very distinguished composers have had to wait for many years—"

Olaf Nilsson smiled at her with the divine assurance of a child.

"Ah, yes!" he said. "But with me, it is different. Doubtless they—those great composers—wrote very fine symphonies. But there is no symphony like mine. The Herr Direktor he is a great and a wise man, a true musician. He will know. He cannot fail to know that there could be only one such symphony!"

Pippa could not find it in her heart to tell him that every young composer in the world thought just this of his first big composition. Some of them were not naive enough to say so, but they all felt so. Did she not know? Had she not studied genius in youth and in maturity—studied it rather scornfully, and dismissed it as not vastly different from other phases of humanity, only, occasionally, more exacting?

At an address in the east sixties, Philippa Carpenter was most exquisitely *chez elle*. It was not a very gorgeous abode, nor was it strictly what we Anglo-Saxons call a home; but it was a very charming place, and expressed Pippa delightfully, if inadequately. That is to say, it expressed one side of her—the highly developed, beautifully cared-for side—the side that

found pleasure in rare things, and occupation in existing perfectly. Although she lived a life more or less insecure and dubious, and had, indeed, no fixed orbit in the cosmos of society, she kept about her always an aura made out of the finer tones of life—the delicacies, and the supreme civilizations.

One evening—it was midwinter, and the coldest time of the year held the city in its grip—she rose suddenly in her bijou drawing-room, and looked about her at the dainty, luxurious things that furnished it, a wild glance such as prisoners throw upon the walls of their cells. Then she walked out into the night. In her heart beat strange words: "No one needs me here, but he needs me—that poet boy with the violin and the divine disregard for money and the world—he needs me! I will give up everything else. I will go to him—I will go to him!"

She did not love Olaf Nilsson, but it seemed to her that what she had to give him was better than love. She had left not only her jewels, but her furs behind, and the wind struck cold against her throat. She felt a curious joy in the chill. It seemed to her that every step was carrying her farther out of her meaningless life, into some other life which was as yet new to her, and yet which she seemed to know marvelously well. It was like a return to some lost young country of dreams to climb the long, rickety stairway to Olaf Nilsson's room.

He opened the door, and wonder and joy filled his pale face. The studio was very dim and bitter cold. A single candle flickered on the table.

"Oh—but you are beautiful!" said Olaf Nilsson softly, and he closed the door. They were alone in the candlelight.

For the first time he saw Pippa without her furs. The toque that inclosed her cream-white face was as simple as one that any shopgirl might have worn. If the angle at which it was set disclosed a great wave of red hair in most gracious fashion, it was no fault of the toque, and detracted in no sense from its simplicity. Her gown was dark, and

soft, and plain. There was nothing radiant about her now—not even her face. Brow and chin were cool and grave of line and tint; the gray eyes were even more full of purple than usual. The lips were folded quietly. There was no provocation, nor coquetry, in the still and lovely countenance. Very gently and simply, like a girl, Pippa came forward with her wonderful hands, slim and ungloved, held out before her.

Olaf Nilsson did not know that she was differently dressed from usual. He only knew that she was utterly and unbelievably lovely. He did not dare to speak, after that first breathless feeling; he was afraid she would melt away, like the thousand other perfect visions that came to him at night in the cold studio. He had been playing on his violin all the evening, and in his exalted mood he almost believed that she was really nothing but an ineffable dream. He kissed the exquisite hands, and then stood—waiting.

"You see," said Philippa gently, "I have come. I had to come." She broke off irrelevantly, looking with a curious content at the one little candle. "I am so glad," she said, as if talking to herself, "that you have just a candle! I love candles."

Still he did not speak, but gazed at her, his soul in his eyes.

"Have you ever thought," she said dreamily, "how much lovelier the idea of candlelight is than lamps, or gas, or anything else? It isn't just that the light itself is softer—it's the association, the poetry."

"In Norway," said Olaf Nilsson, "candlelight meant—home. My mother spinning, my sister sounding the *kur*, to call down the cows from the upper slope."

"Candles for merrymakings and marriages, and night vigils, and altars," said Pippa, staring at the one little flame that flickered in the draft, "and corpse candles for the dead. Oh, no wonder nearly every one loves candlelight!"

He had been very patient, but now, trembling very much, he took a step nearer.

• "Tell me," he managed to say, under his breath, "is this candle to be—an offering of thanksgiving?"

She loved his way of putting it—oh, he was a natural poet in every heart throb. And he needed her! She looked about the bare, cold room. How he needed her! She would fill his heart so full of dreams that he would not feel the cold; he should play for her, and in listening to his music she would find that lost golden country into which she had looked with such dazzled, wistful eyes when she was a little girl.

"Oh," she cried, with a little catch in her breath, "do you want me? Do you care for me, Olaf Nilsson?"

"Want you? Care for you?" His voice was as amazed as if she had asked him if he loved music. "I would die for you," he said simply.

So she began to speak, and there were two voices speaking through her—one that could be heard, and one that was silent. In everything that she said there was an unsaid echo.

"I have thought it all over," was what she actually said, "and I know that we are two derelicts, you and I—two lonely souls, and—and if we can give each other companionship and—and happiness—" The unheard voice added—pulsing on the unlit pause that held between them: "*All that I have touched has been empty, and hard, and cruel. I have had no joy of my life. I want to give, and, in giving, to gain the peace that is better and dearer than joy. I can lift you up, and make you a man. It is better than a life of dreams, and regrets, and fretfulness.*"

Aloud she said, "Neither of us cares for money, but we both love the big and true things that life has to give to her lovers. Let us, side by side, start out on the highroad. We owe life nothing, and life is not our debtor."

In her heart she added: "*He will have a bitter defeat here and soon, when he finds that his symphony has been declined. He will find his castle in the air crushed, and his dreams dispelled. Could my wretched and unfinished existence know a higher destiny of fulfillment than to save him in the hour of his*

failure? And, for the rest, I want nothing more of life myself. I have proved that happiness is not for me. But, hand in hand with this dreaming boy, is it not possible—”

But Olaf Nilsson's eyes were full of pain—haggard and tragic in his young, white face. It dawned slowly and strangely on Pippa that he was less utterly and weakly a boy than she had thought. A man's renunciation was struggling with his young, warm ardor.

“I cannot take your sacrifice!” he cried painfully. “You are offering me too much.”

Pippa shook her head. There was a curious bitterness in her voice as she answered: “No! I am only offering you—myself.” Olaf Nilsson did not understand.

“It is—too much,” he muttered huskily.

“No,” said Mrs. Carpenter quietly, “it is not too much. It is all that I have to give, but that is not—too much. It is quite possible that it is not enough.”

The boy looked as if he could have knelt. His blue eyes were wide and remote with their passion of dreams.

“Most Beautiful,” he whispered, “I shall not forget! I shall never forget. And yet—I cannot take your sacrifice. Poverty has made me a poor thing, but not so poor as that!”

Pippa, with a strange and wonderful pang, realized that he did not know at all the quality of her sacrifice. To him it was no mess of porridge that she was giving up, but an exquisite birth-right.

“You—so high and so perfect,” the young voice went on brokenly, incoherently—“to stoop to me! Dear one, what have I done to deserve so much? But you were made to walk on flowers and wear white velvet—do you dream that I would let you come to me—here?”

“I have come to you,” she said, very gently.

Olaf Nilsson went to her and bent above her hands, kissing first one and then the other reverently, as if they were holy things.

“Yes, you sweet lady,” he whispered, “you have come to me! God thank you

for it, for I have no words. But—I will not take you. I will send you away. Do you hear? I, who love you, who adore you, will send you out of my life.”

“Forever?” she said quietly. She knew the potency of the word. Olaf hesitated, and pain drew his face into fine, hard lines.

“Not forever,” he breathed, and a light came into his eyes—“only until I have won success.”

Pippa smiled a little scornfully. “Is it possible,” she said, “that you want to wait, like a shipping clerk or a brewer's man, until you can support me?”

“Dear——” he broke in, but she went on, in the same soft, disdainful tone:

“I came to offer you dreams—and what you want is a bank account! I came to share my heart with you, and you are only thinking of sharing a furnished flat with me!”

But Olaf Nilsson shook his head. “Lovely Beloved,” he said quaintly, “you know better than that.”

And so they stood, facing one another, each amazed by the ideals and the nobility of the other—closer, as a matter of fact, to true affinity than ever before. So do our moments of bodily parting become most truly moments of spiritual meeting. It is a paradox as old as love and life.

“Some day,” he said softly, “I will conquer the world and bring it to you, and lay it at your dear feet—some day!”

“Some day?” echoed the woman, and the twist of her lips was of irony as well as of pain. “Some day I shall be old, Olaf Nilsson!”

He laughed at the thought. There was, indeed, something ageless and immortal about Pippa Carpenter. For fifteen years, time—as women recognize time, the time of fading lips, silverying hair, deepening lines—had stood still for her, dispassionately, not kindly, but like one indifferent to her. Yet “some day” sounded sinister and chill. She had a sting of revolt as she stared at the boy's beautiful face in the flickering candlelight. He was better and

braver than she had thought; and yet—and yet—Was she disappointed to find, at the test, the poet and dreamer melt like mist wreaths, leaving simple man? Suddenly he seemed all man—elemental, working man, who knew by tradition and inheritance that, if man does not live by bread alone, neither does he live on visions or raptures.

A knock sounded at the door, and mechanically Olaf Nilsson went to it and opened it. A fellow lodger handed him a square of white.

"Found it downstairs," he said briefly, and went on up yet another rickety flight to a yet cheaper attic room. Olaf Nilsson, as if in a daze, took the letter to the table and stared at it by the light of the candle. Philippa stood perfectly still, looking at him. The boy lifted startled eyes to her, then looked again incredulously at the envelope. After a moment he opened it with hands that shook. The sensitive, delicate violinist's fingers were suddenly clumsy. It seemed that he would never get the folded sheet.

"Oh, my God!" said Olaf Nilsson, not irreverently, but softly and wonderfully. He suddenly crushed the letter into a ball, and it dropped at his feet. Pippa saw his face working in the candlelight; there were tears on his cheeks.

"It is true!" he gasped hoarsely. "They are going to do my symphony. It is all right—all right. The Herr Direktor says—But read what he says!" He stooped, groping excitedly for the crumpled letter.

"Another time," said Pippa. Her voice was kind and steady. There was no tremble in it as she added: "I am so glad—for you. So thankful—for you."

Olaf Nilsson turned to her with a radiant look. The chill, dark room was suddenly warm with the light of his face.

"And now, Beautiful Beloved," he cried, "we can be happy. It is not quite the world that I have to offer you"—he laughed joyously—"but it is a piece of it—a piece of the bright, splendid, golden world! There will be money—see, the Herr Direktor says I have only

to ask—there will be hundreds—many hundreds of dollars, dear heart—think of it! I can buy you dainty things almost worthy of you!"

Pippa looked down at her slim, lovely hands. The rings that she had left behind her when she came to-night were worth many thousands of dollars. Was it possible that he did not know? Was it conceivable that he really believed he could give her some material pleasure with which she was not satiated? Alas, he could find no jewels to give her that would be new—she had wanted only his dreams; and it was too late for them.

"Let us go out and celebrate," went on the boy eagerly. "I have the rent money saved up. We can use that, and to-morrow I shall see the Herr Direktor. Oh, Most Dear, we will go to a restaurant where there are flowers, and lights, and—yes, I will even endure their execrable music to-night—and we will have a wonderful dinner!"

Pippa put her hand to her throat.

Oh, those "wonderful dinners" that she had had with other men! She knew that if she went into a restaurant with Olaf Nilsson, and saw his poet's face in the light of a little, red-shaded lamp, she would die!

She fastened her jacket quietly and turned to the door.

"Where are you going?" he exclaimed in affright. "Pippa! You are not going to leave me now? You came to me—"

"That was different," she said steadily, as she opened the door. "It is all," she smiled faintly in the candlelight, "all a matter of standard. We were two derelicts—two souls groping toward each other. Now you are a successful composer, and I am—Pippa Carpenter. It is all a matter of standard," she repeated. "I couldn't stay now—you don't need me, and so I couldn't stay."

She was passing through the doorway when she paused, and looked back rather wistfully.

"Do you know," said Pippa gently, "I almost wish that letter had not come, Olaf Nilsson."

So she went away and left him in the candlelight.

TARQUIN'S CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE



BY
THOMAS
P.
BYRON

TARQUIN awoke gasping, agony compressing his heart as in a vise. He looked through the open door into the lighted bathroom, and saw that the hands of the little clock on the shelf stood at half past eleven. This last attack was the fiercest of all, and as he writhed in pain the events of the night passed before him. Creissels' words rang in his ears over and over again.

Creissels had, as usual, been drinking more than one should when one is entertaining guests, but there had been no mistaking the earnestness and despair in his face and voice. And the truth of his words had sunk into Tarquin's heart.

"Why do you stay here, Tarquin?" he had said. "You are not one of us. You can do something that is worth doing. I cannot. I wish to God I could."

The New Year's call at Creissels' had been the only one that Tarquin had made, and he had come home shortly after ten with that acute pain at his heart that came always with increasing violence and frequency. The reception at Creissels' had bordered on license even by the lax standards of the town. Tarquin knew his town and his townspeople. He was one of the earliest of its citizens, for he had been born there in the first days of the place, and he had lived among its people all his life. They were the only people with whom he had ever associated, yet he was an alien

among them. There was a subtle difference between him and them, and both he and they knew that he was not of them. Yet he liked them, and they liked him.

He tried to analyze it clearly as he lay there wrestling with his pain in the futile endeavor to sleep.

It had always been there, for he remembered the vague, confused longings of his boyhood—the wild desire of youth to go forth into the world with nothing but his two hands and a heart full of hope to do something that would be lasting, something that would be for keeps. Always his ambitions had pointed from home, and he remembered that no one had understood that desire—no one save his father, who had sternly repressed it.

His father had been a man fine-natured, the soul of honor, religious to the point of fanaticism, and one of those autocrats who insist upon regulating to the smallest detail the lives of those who are dependent upon them.

In his shadow Tarquin's mother and sisters had lived their starved, joyless lives, and died. The old man's whim had been sufficient to drive from them their dearest friends; he had imposed his own loneliness and asceticism upon them all. Tarquin, when young, had rebelled once or twice, but he had been punished with a remorseless cruelty that had taught him that he must live his life according to his father's standards, or his father would break him to bits.

From a moral point of view the results had been excellent; Tarquin's father had chosen his friends and his pleasures, and they had been extremely moral friends and extremely moral pleasures. They were dull, too, but Tarquin's conscience told him that it was just; he had yielded his father filial duty, and his father had made him a man honorable and virtuous. He had bided his time patiently, never sowing wild oats, never venturing into the world on his own hook. He was a mere puppet, obeying the paternal hand on the strings, and all the while he felt that there was something within him, the best of what was within him, that was being slowly stifled.

And now his father was dead, and he was rich and free—useless gifts, for youth and the ability to do the things he wished were dead within him. He had sunk, year by year and day by day, in the swamp of his environment, until only his head remained above the muck, and the far, bright horizons of youth and hope had dropped from sight one by one.

Tarquin had held ideals of friendship that he had despised of realizing, ideals of citizenship that he had ceased to hope for, and ideals of womanhood that he still dreamed of, for he had glimpsed them in the lives of uncomplaining martyrdom of his mother and sisters.

He had thought to find *her* in a girl who was young and carefully brought up—as were few of the women of Tarquin's town. She was full of charm and intelligence and the capacity for fine things, and he had loved her with the desperate love of a lonely man.

Yet that night at Creissels' he saw that she had been playing a part. She had been pleased at the scene that had disgusted him, and she had tried to conceal her pleasure from him. She was one of them; their ways were hers; there was the same subtle difference between him and her, and the same subtle link between her and the others. Tarquin did not condemn nor despise his townspeople; he only knew that their ways were not—never could be—*his*,

and he had felt overwhelmingly alone, and becoming sick had muttered an excuse and left. He realized that *she* had been his last hope, and now he felt that he and his life were a failure. In a way he had lived a life of constant self-sacrifice, yet it had not even satisfied his father who had exacted it. Deep within him there had been something that called him to an appointed task, and he had refused the call. He had been miserable and unhappy because he had been out of place. Somewhere there must be some one thing for him to do. He would have known it immediately had he only found it. But he had never searched. He had been fighting his destiny.

There occurred to him a verse that had thrilled him years ago, because it had told him better than he could ever say himself something that slept deep in his heart, and he muttered it to himself as the clock hands crept together on the dial:

"The Lady Moon is my lover,
My friends are the oceans four,
The heavens have roofed me over
And the dawn is my golden door;
I would liefer follow the condor
Or the sea gull, soaring from ken,
Than bury my godhead yonder
In the dust of the whirl of men."

The doubt of a futile life assailed him. Had he been given his ten talents? Had he been given the wings of an eagle, and had he refused to soar the ether because he had found himself in a barnyard?

The pain at his heart grew into an agony that blinded, stifled, paralyzed him; he delved roughly into his tortured brain for an idea that would give him relief. Bodily suffering were nothing, and it were sweet to die could he only find balm for the grief at his brain. He gave a mute cry for help on God and man, and a sudden courage came to him; the pain relaxed a trifle, and he told himself that he was a coward to despair. It was *never* too late; even yet he could claim his heritage, and do or try to do the thing that was to last. The joy of the thing might be gone, but the thing itself was surely left.

His pain went from him suddenly and completely, as was customary, leaving him weak and drowsy in a delicious relief.

He glanced sleepily at the clock. Both hands pointed at twelve. In the hall he heard the footsteps of his servant, Joyce, and at the same moment the clock in the bathroom struck the first stroke of twelve with a clear, silvery peal. Tarquin dropped back to sleep with a smile at his new-found determination on his lips.

The next day he felt better than he had done for months, and his mysterious ailment seemed gone from him. He lost no time, but put his affairs in order, and began his pilgrimage.

In the years that followed Tarquin traveled far and wide. Those who wander are of a caste by themselves, and Tarquin owned their magic touch of vagabondage. He who had been an alien among his own people found kinship in a day with men with whom he pieced out the deficiency of common speech by signs.

He walked up and down the highways and byways of the earth; new impressions and new ideas flung themselves upon him in an avalanche, and, searching for the thing he was to do, he wondered more and more at the problem of life.

Strange tongues came to him—slowly, for Tarquin had started too late ever to become a linguist, but he was that one man in a thousand who had no strings to hold him to the land, the religion, the viewpoint to which he was born. He was a clean sheet of paper for all men and things to write their lessons on, and as he began to grope beneath the surface and pick the same shining fragments of gold from the hearts of men, from their religions, from their customs, from their forms of government, he became a true cosmopolite—unprejudiced, unsure, certain of nothing, puzzled but unterrified by the mammoth, and to him meaningless enigma of life.

When he met General Zumalacarregui he had not yet found what he was

to do, nor had he dreamed what he was to become.

Tarquin had come to Funchal from Las Palmas and the West Coast, and was waiting for a steamer to take him to Gibraltar. He and Zumalacarregui looked at each other in the hotel dining room, and at the glance picked each other out of all the rest as men unable to be classified. After dinner they spoke, and walked up and down the veranda, looking down on the bay and town. They talked in Spanish, which Zumalacarregui spoke as a true Basque—vilely, and they talked about men and places.

Zumalacarregui was burned black by the sun, was short and squat almost to deformity, and was grizzled with age and experience. He was a man with an idea, too, and presently he told it to Tarquin, smoking countless cigarettes the while. And Tarquin smoked and listened.

Zumalacarregui was a fanatic on republicanism. He maintained that the worst republic was infinitely superior to the best of monarchical governments. His reason for this was that true republicanism was annihilating to *caste* which, more than all other things combined, had served to throttle, enslave, keep in ignorance and misery, and degrade in body and soul the great majority of the human race.

Tarquin had often thought the same thing, and listened, a little puzzled, for he surmised that there was something unexpected coming. Zumalacarregui went on to prove his thesis. His idea was no theory, and he himself was no theorist or dreamer, but the most practical of men. It was not the beautiful theory of republicanism that he loved, but its practical success as proved by history. He had the history of republics at his fingers' ends, and he quoted long statistics to prove that republics produced the best men, soldiers, artists, statesmen; that they gave the best opportunity to mankind for development and happiness.

He pointed to the Dutch republic—to the things it had done, to the men

it had produced in every walk of life. He showed that the world had advanced more in a hundred years of republicanism, other nations following where France and the American republic had lighted the way, than in all the centuries before. He numbered the long list of inventions, of things that have gone to make for the good of humanity, and showed that most of them had come from the brains of the children of the republics.

"I tell you," he said, in his quick, abrupt, calm way, "that when men spring from the common people and do things and invent things, their country is either a republic, has been one, or is about to be one. Look at the glories of the first French empire. It was the republic that bred the men that won them. Look at —." He named another great power. "She will be a republic soon."

Tarquin listened to the argument in silence, neither attempting to refute nor command it. Changing abruptly, Zumalacarregui told his own story.

He was a Basque, of the family of the great Carlist hero of his name, and he had been a priest. He had drawn in the principle of the divine right of kings even with his mother's milk, but had become a republican from the study of history. He had fought in the last Carlist war because he thought that the reforms promised by the Carlists would pave the way for the republic that was his dream. He had been unfrocked and excommunicated, yet he still called himself a Catholic, and practiced the rites of his church.

"I am a better Catholic than those who had me expelled," he said. "While I believe and worship God according to my belief, and do my duty, do you think any man or assemblage of men can drive me from Christ? No."

His defiance enraptured Tarquin.

Zumalacarregui continued his story.

He had been sent to Ceuta for his part in the revolution, but had escaped, and lived among the Moors for five years. At the end of that time he had enlisted in the Foreign Legion at Tlemcen, and had won his commission. He

had soldiered in Senegal, in Madagascar, and in Indo-China. An old comrade of Carlist days, met by chance, had induced him to go to South America—to the republic of Soriano.

He stopped. "Do you know Soriano?" he asked Tarquin abruptly.

"Yes," answered Tarquin. "San Felipe y Santiago. It is one of the places in the world that I love best."

"I lived there for ten years," said Zumalacarregui. "I was minister of war for five of them. I have been in exile for two years, and—I sail for Soriano to-morrow—to overthrow the government."

"To overthrow the government!" echoed Tarquin.

"Yes. Not for lust of power or gold or to free her from unjust and tyrannical rule. Not for any of those reasons, but merely to reform the school system."

"To reform the school system!" echoed Tarquin again.

"Listen!" said Zumalacarregui forcibly. "What is the strength of a republic? The justice and equity of its laws? The equality of opportunity? No! But in the hearts of its citizens, and in their belief in the sacred principles of republicanism. A republic will never be just or free until its citizens are just and free. The money spent in the enforcement of complicated laws were better used in educating its citizens to respect them—in teaching them to be citizens in fact.

"The duties of a citizen and the sacredness of liberty should be taught coincident with the belief in the true God, and also the corresponding hatred for class, caste, privilege, titles, and all the tinsel in which injustice and greed and oppression wrap themselves to dazzle the eyes of fools.

"Monarchies are far more cunning than republics. In their schools belief in the divine right of kings, in the divine privilege—the superiority of class—is taught rigorously as the first duty to God.

"But what republic teaches the opposite of all this—the equality of man, the duties of citizenship, the justice of

equal rights? In your country every schoolboy can tell of the rise and fall of empires, the conquests of weak nations by strong ones, but not one can give you a clear idea of the growth of the spirit of liberty and the belief in, and success of, popular government, or the beauty and justice of the principles that lay behind the French Revolution over which the Reign of Terror hangs like a hideous curtain over a priceless treasure.

"But these things will come. South America is a wonderful place. The future of the Latin race lies there. Liberty is a Latin word. A free Rome once conquered the world; a free France defied it and forced liberty upon it. Spain alone of the Latin sisters has never been strong or free—great, perhaps, but never strong or free. And Spanish will be the tongue of the great republic that will stretch from Tierra del Fuego to Panama."

When General Zumalacarregui sailed for South America Tarquin went with him, fascinated alike by the man and the idea. The man himself was so fine, so unquestioning and dauntless, so sure of the thing that he was about to do; and the idea was so dazzling, and it opened up such a luminous vista of possibilities.

They landed on the great river far above San Felipe y Santiago, and at their coming the revolution swept over the republic like the flame of a powder train. There was desperate fighting, and Tarquin saw most of it.

And then he met a *girl*.

There had been an epic struggle for the possession of the plaza of a little town on the Rio Yi. An old church that had witnessed many such scenes in the days when Spaniard and Portuguese struggled for the possession of Soriano was used as a hospital, and Tarquin entered it to have an arm, pierced by a ball, dressed.

The flags were covered with wounded and dying. Men groaned in agony, and called on Heaven. At the foot of the crucified Christ that stood at the altar rail a man with his stomach torn open

by a piece of shell clung to the cross, and raised his bloodless and pain-contorted face in the endeavor to kiss the nailed, bleeding feet of the Savior, perhaps as a last prayer for pardon. As Tarquin stared at him his grasp relaxed, and he fell dead in a red puddle on another man, who screamed with pain and blasphemed horribly.

A priest was among the wounded, administering the sacraments and dressing wounds, and the *girl* was helping him. She came quickly to Tarquin to bandage his arm. She was young, slim, and had curious, half-slanted eyes, like a gypsy of Albaicin. The hands that deftly and calmly bound up his arm were scarce as wide as Tarquin's two fingers.

"Who are you?" said Tarquin in a whisper.

The slanted eyes looked into his, and he saw that they were of that rare green color that is considered the ultimate beauty in Spain. The color fled from her face, and she strove to answer.

"I will come back when it is over," said Tarquin, and then he went forth to the battle to be swept on in the march that they had commenced to San Felipe y Santiago, while she returned to her task of succoring the wounded.

They had seen each other but a moment; they had met and known and loved each other in a single glance.

It was the last spark of magic that kindled into flame the youth that he thought had been burned out seven years before.

Life? Had he ever thought it was a problem, an enigma?

He loved a friend—Zumalacarregui; he loved a *girl*—he did not even know her name; and he had an idea to fight and live or die for.

That was the answer to the problem of life; to love and to work.

The revolution had run over Soriano like a train of powder, but it had died in one locality as soon as it lighted in another. After the first success of surprise, the insurrectionists were everywhere defeated.

Tarquin, separated from Zumalacar-

regui, and penned up against a western "cuchilla," was forced to surrender to prevent the useless slaughter of his men. But he had done much in the few weeks of the revolution. The score, he was compelled to admit to himself, was greater than that of all his previous life.

A general amnesty was declared. The rebels were treated as combatants, and gave themselves up as prisoners of war, but Tarquin was taken to San Felipe y Santiago to be tried on the charge of having violated the customs of civilized warfare.

Tarquin heard the bell of the cathedral across the plaza boom out twelve. It was midnight. He had but twelve hours of life remaining, for he was to be publicly shot at noon on the morrow.

He was compelled to admit that his trial had been fair, and his judges both fair and courteous. After the sentence had been pronounced, the general presiding had told him privately how sorry they all were, the officer who had prosecuted him so vigorously but so impersonally and courteously had begged his pardon for the things he had been obliged to do, and the one who had defended him so desperately had assured him with a quaver in his voice that he had done his best, and had wrung his hand hard.

Tarquin knew it.

He was alone in a cell at the end of a corridor. There were no other prisoners—no one save the sentry, whom he could see by pressing his face against the bars of the door.

He began to think of death; at first curiously, then with fascination, ultimately with horror. It was only the day before that Zumalacarregui, and his idea, and the *girl* of the old church of the Rio Yi had solved for him the problem of life. Now he was to face that of death. It seemed to Tarquin that he was young to die. He had so much to live for! Eternal hope told him that yet he would be spared. He had twelve hours. Much could happen in twelve hours. Yet twelve hours was a terrible watch to travel alone, with death waiting at the end of the road.

He lay down and tried to sleep, but sleep would not come.

He began to doubt, and thought of his wasted life. To-morrow he must pass, pay the penalty for his sins and neglects. They seemed to him crimes now. Then in turn he commenced to wonder. Was there really a hell beyond? Or a heaven? And if there were, must one have the approval of creed to enter? He thought of his father's gloomy, terrible religion, a faith that had struck despair into his heart even when he was a child.

He began to quiver with dread at the thought of the death that he had faced a score of times in the last few weeks without a tremor.

He drove the thought from his head, and thought of the *girl*. Was he never to see her again? And Zumalacarregui? What had become of him? Had he escaped, or had he been taken? He regretted that he had not asked, for now that he was to die they would have told him. He remembered Zumalacarregui's superb defiance and certain belief in his idea. The idea! That surely was right. Tarquin clenched his fist, and some of Zumalacarregui's dauntless spirit came to him.

Footsteps rang in the corridor. It was a civilian followed by two soldiers. The civilian entered the cell, apologizing for disturbing Tarquin as he did so, and the soldiers marched away.

The man was fat and swarthy, had a black mustache, and wore a bright-red wide faja about his waist. He eyed Tarquin with an endless interest and curiosity, and another emotion that could not be deciphered, and began to question him about his associates—their names and who they were.

Tarquin thought he understood. The man had been sent there to get Tarquin's last confession, to implicate others who had been concerned in the *pronunciamento*.

The man spoke good English, although with an accent, and Tarquin was sure that he was an Italian. He answered in sullen monosyllables.

Then the man changed his tactics, and began to ask Tarquin about himself.

Hope leaped in the condemned man's heart. They had found that he was not guilty—the American minister had intervened—he had been reprieved.

He told the man everything that he asked, and they talked for hours.

"Do you not want a priest?" the Italian asked him suddenly.

"No," answered Tarquin. "I do not believe in that sort of thing."

"No? But even so. It is good to talk with one who has experience in this sort of thing—who has talked with others who are—as you are."

Again Tarquin despaired.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Are you a prisoner or a spy? Are you also sentenced to death?"

"No," said the Italian gently. "I am come here only to talk to you. I wanted to know you."

Tarquin fell silent and ceased to answer. The distraction of the man's presence, of the hope that he might be saved, fell away in the terrible idea of death. He brooded.

He began to wish that he had asked for a priest, that he might talk to him about God, the unknown God, and about the terrible jump that he was to make in the dark. It was not what he was going to face. It was the transcendent loneliness of it all, and the horror of waiting. He understood why men committed suicide on the eve of execution. He felt a sudden warm gratitude toward the Italian for being there with him.

It occurred to him that his nerves were bad. He had drunk strong black coffee the night before. One thing haunted him. He, whose name had gone through Soriano during the few weeks of the revolution as a byword for valor, was to be shot publicly. What a horror, what an unspeakable degradation it would be if he broke down!

He put his hand on the Italian's shoulder.

"Tell me—" he commenced, with his soul in his voice. The Italian quivered with emotion.

But again there came the tramp of feet in the corridor.

It was a squad this time, and a man with his breakfast. The squad waited, and, as he ate slowly, he heard the clock boom out eight strokes. Four hours more. He hugged them to his breast, those four precious hours of life.

When he had finished, the Italian poured something white from a flask into a cup, and offered it to him.

"It is aguardiente," he said.

Tarquin handed the cup back politely. "No, thank you," he answered.

The Italian gulped it down himself. All the soldiers were eying Tarquin, yet each time he met their gaze their glances fell.

The Italian took him by the arm.

"Come," he said kindly. "You must prepare yourself for a surprise."

"A reprieve?" cried Tarquin.

"I must not tell you."

They marched him forth from the prison into the blinding sunshine. The plaza was alive with people in fiesta attire. A lane held by two lines of soldiers led through them across to an open space beside the great bulk of the cathedral. The trees were bright and green; down a long street he could see the sparkling waters of the bay, and the cerro beyond with its fort and lighthouse, and the sun, and stripes of the gay flag of Soriano fluttering above them.

Tarquin threw his hand before his eyes, and shook off the Italian's arm.

"I can walk alone," he said.

It was a terrible passage to run the gauntlet of those thousands of people through that narrow lane, and a spasm of doubt went through Tarquin.

"I have changed my mind," he said hurriedly to the Italian, who continued by his side. "I would like to speak with a priest."

"There is no time," answered the other gently.

A face peering out from the crowd as he passed fascinated Tarquin. It stared at him white and mute, and he recognized one of his comrades—one to whom his word had been law in the fighting. As they neared the cathedral Tarquin saw four soldiers carrying something on a litter.

"Not this way, fools!" snarled the officer commanding Tarquin's squad. But it was too late. Tarquin had seen the man they bore, had seen his face.

It was Zumalacarregui. Zumalacarregui had not escaped, nor had he been reprieved, as Tarquin was going to be. It stunned him like a blow.

Suddenly he found himself in the open space against the wall of the cathedral. The line of soldiers broke away under hoarse commands of the officers, and Tarquin was face to face with a thousand troops and ten thousand people, all of whom stared at him in silence.

He and the Italian and the squad were alone. The stucco of the wall he was against was broken in half a dozen places at a height of three or four feet from the ground by fusillades. There was blood on the ground.

Already they were binding his hands behind him.

"Then I am to die," he said to the Italian.

"Yes," the man answered in English. "You must be brave. You must die like a man."

"I am young to die," said Tarquin. "There is so much that I want to do."

"I know. I know," said the other, with a quaver in his voice.

Tarquin took his stand with his back to the wall.

"Not that!" he said fiercely, as they would have bandaged his eyes.

The officer hesitated. "Let it be as he wishes," the Italian commanded.

The squad marched away, and Tarquin saw that another was standing thirty yards away. The Italian remained.

"You were a brave foe," he whispered low. "I am —. Once, as you probably know, I, too, was sentenced to be shot. But I was reprieved. It was because of *that night* that I came to pass the last night with you."

The name he spoke was that of a famous soldier of Soriano.

"Thank you," said Tarquin, and then the Italian was gone, and he was alone,

facing them all. The plaza was utterly silent.

One of the firing squad shook like an aspen, another was stoical, a third was red-eyed as if he had wept, a fourth —

But the officer was speaking low: "Shoot straight, *camaradas*. It is the kindest thing you can do."

The commands rang out like thunder in the unnatural stillness. Tarquin took a quick glance toward the *cerro*. In the air was the white flash of the wings of sea gulls, and high, high overhead a bird hung motionless like a speck in the air. It could not have been a condor, for the condor never strayed so far from the Andes, but Tarquin remembered the old song:

"I would liefer follow the condor
Or the sea gull, soaring from ken,
Than bury my godhead yonder
In the dust of the whirl of men."

"I have learned to live, and I have learned to die," he thought, as the guns of the soldiers presented.

The muzzle of that of the stoical soldier wabbled, but that of the tearful one pointed like a rock straight at Tarquin's heart. Tarquin stared at that one, and thought of the *girl* of the church by the Rio Yi. *She* was to have his last thought.

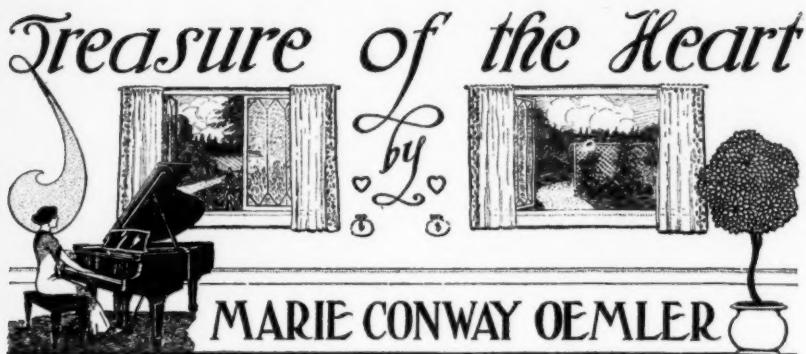
Then he saw her burst through the line of soldiers, and run toward him, her half-slanted green eyes fixed on his.

Flame burst from the leveled muskets in a crash like thunder, yet she came on smiling—closer—closer—closer—

Joyce thought he had heard his master call, and he entered the room just as the bathroom clock tinkled the last stroke of twelve, and the New Year was hailed by the blast of a cannon in the public square.

Tarquin lay quite still, as if asleep, but on examination Joyce found that although his body was still warm he was dead.

Treasure of the Heart



AMY! Isn't it wonderful, isn't it glorious? Good Lord, I can hardly believe it myself, as yet! I'm afraid every minute I'll have to wake up. Amy, Leila is going to marry me! You understand, dearest little friend? Leila is going to marry me!"

The ghost of Amy's voice came out of a great darkness, whimpering bleakly:

"Leila? Leila?"

"Leila, Leila, Leila!" Gordon caressed the pretty name lingeringly, with a lover's naïve delight. "So surprised, Amy? Little Gray Dove, why don't you lift those great eyes of yours and see Love—when he comes so close to you, too!"

She who had loved him entirely, all her life, lifted her eyes to his wonderingly. Love had, indeed, walked so close to Amy that she had needed to lift her shy glance to find him mirrored in a stranger's; and the beloved never knew!

"Don't receive my great news so placidly, Amy." A hint of injured pride was in his voice. "As usual, I've raced home to tell you, you first of all. And you're taking it as a mere matter of course! I thought you'd care, you know, a little bit."

Amy steadied herself gallantly. She could hear her own natural voice in quiet and earnest reply; but she wondered at the dullness which overlooked;

surely, she thought, her ears had been keen to detect that poignant quiver in Gordon's voice!

As usual, they walked up the broad old stairs together, parting with pleasant good nights; but all the while her heart was clamoring insistently: "This is good-by. Gordon does not love you! Gordon does not love you!"

After the manner of women, she laid by her shy dream in the lavender and rosemary of unselfishness. Since Gordon wished it, she forced herself to be one of his bride's attendants.

Gordon came home, five years later, to attend his guardian's funeral. Leila was not with him; for, of course, a great and famous beauty and social leader has too many calls upon her time to expend any of that precious commodity upon an old professor's obsequies.

Gordon had grown: stronger, colder, harder. In his eyes burned a new light—the cold, clear light of calculation and of dominion; the lips were straight and smileless, the brows concentrated; he seemed to incarnate in himself that fierce and intense force which seeks, and attains, success.

He felt, and expressed, a sincere sorrow for his old guardian's death; and he was very kind, and very patient, with the old man's old wife, who had mothered him and Amy, two orphaned children left to her care. But he was as a

hound in leash, almost tremblingly eager to be gone; he had so many big deals on hand just then, and time is so precious.

Gordon rushed back to his place, a tooth-and-nail foothold in the big struggle; and Amy stayed behind in her place—so quiet a place that she herself was utterly unaware how big it really was. For love is a power which spreads in ever-widening circles, and Amy's, flowing outward and onward, swept many another into the calm current of its sweet and living waters. Most of her work lay among children; and it may have been through them that she gained her delicate perception, her exquisite intuition; for children communicate the incommunicable; upon their fresh faces, as morning dew upon opening flowers, is the sign of the unseen; in a child's eyes the vision mirrors its last traces.

When his little girl was born, Gordon wrote hurriedly to the homefolk. The child was very delicate, he said. And he had, remembering another little girl, called the new baby "Amy."

Gordon's little girl! From the deep, deep well of Amy's mother spirit, love almost felt the pressure of that soft small body against her breast; and it comforted her oddly to think that, perhaps, the slumbering soul of her little namesake might dimly divine it, and rest the softer for it.

She sent, from time to time, little frocks so fairylike that Leila exclaimed over them.

"Why, they'd cost a perfectly fabulous price!" she told Gordon. "The designs are all original, the needlework the most lovely I've ever laid my eyes on. These old-maid women certainly can do wonders with a needle, poor things!"

She herself wrote to thank Amy. She was going abroad for her health, she said; besides, she hadn't a decent frock left. She'd advise Amy, if she ever went abroad, to get just her dinner frocks from Paquin's, her tailored togs from London, but to be sure and buy all her lingerie in Vienna; they had it so much finer in Vienna! She hoped

to see Amy when she returned. And the nurses assured her that the baby was getting on as well as could be expected; and oh, thank Amy again for those perfectly adorable little frocks!

After that, there was a long, long silence.

The June afternoon was soft and cloudy, with an occasional gentle sprinkling of rain to freshen the garden; doors and windows were wide open to the wet fragrance of the breeze. In her chair on the south porch the old aunt dozed peacefully, her knitting needles still loosely clasped in her relaxed hands.

In the old parlor, Amy played softly to herself those unreal and fairylike melodies of Chopin, which are glimmering moonlight gates upon the Road of Yesterdays. And then she lifted her eyes and saw the child standing in the open door, eagerly and yet gravely regarding her.

Instinctively Amy smiled; and the child smiled back, a dear and alluring smile, showing the tiny teeth. Its fair and fragile face was lighted by black-lashed eyes of softest gray, its hair was of palest gold, and a deep cleft marked its small chin; the dainty garments which clothed it were of the costliest simplicity.

"Why, Baby! Where did you come from?" Amy rose from the piano.

The child waved a small hand vaguely.

"Oh, little runaway!" Amy moved toward it as she spoke.

With the skimming motion of the swallow's flight, the child retreated. Down the polished and shadowed hall, out through the wet garden, among the showery roses, the spicy pinks, the little white-shod feet fled lightly; the little white figure vanished behind the old oak, beneath which she and Gordon had many a time "played house." Just beyond this oak the high, red-brick wall shut off the highway.

"Baby!" called Amy coaxingly. "Baby!" But the child had vanished.

Puzzled and confused, Amy returned to the house. Strange babies in costly

frocks do not, however, drop out of the clouds, to vanish behind oak trees in gardens. She would presently be called upon by anxious folk seeking a precious truant. But the afternoon passed; and no one came to inquire for a gold-haired baby. Amy wished, too, that she might see the little one again. Such deep and shining eyes, so tender and endearing a smile!

In the garden, where she had played in babyhood, Amy passed her happiest hours; here, in the summer evenings, while her aunt slept peacefully, Amy brought her work. This afternoon, her sewing had fallen idly to her lap. Drowsy bees droned among drowsier flowers; a light, young breeze frolicked with light, young leaves. Beside the summerhouse a graveled rose walk ran, and down this scented and petaled path trotted a tiny figure; halting beneath a rosebush which shot up greenly above its fair head, the gray-eyed child looked at her inquiringly.

"*You!*" said Amy, half breathlessly, with a sudden keen rush of pleasure.

Poised as if for flight, a finger to its lips, the child watched her with that intent and unabashed stare, that long, clear look, with which young children regard one.

Amy slipped to her knees, coaxingly holding out her hands. She felt an almost painful eagerness to "make friends." The baby stood irresolute, a troubled and perplexed frown growing upon its white forehead.

"Come!" pleaded Amy. The baby backed away.

Reviewing the ways of babies, Amy picked up her sewing. In her pleasant voice she sang softly, one of those crooning rockaby tunes that charm children.

Very cautiously the child edged nearer, always keeping just out of reach; like a half-tamed bird it fluttered about her. It made no sound, not even a baby murmur; but she thought she had never seen eyes so full of pure and limpid light; and its hair was as if spun of spring sunshine.

Of a sudden the doctor's loud and cheerful voice called from the garden

gate, and Amy rose to answer. In that one moment the child fled; nor, when the doctor had gone, after his weekly visit to her aunt, could Amy find the slightest trace of her little visitor.

But the child stayed in her thoughts; and, as if it had walked out of them, she saw it, a week later, trotting sedately along the upstairs hall. A long shaft of sunlight streamed through the door opening out upon the veranda, and in this light the child moved and seemed the very spirit of it.

Amy stopped in her tracks, at the head of the stairs; turning its head with birdlike grace, the child waved a hand, a dimpled baby hand, in friendliest greeting. But something clutched at Amy's heart; *she began, then, to know.*

She could hardly make herself understand that something out of the ordinary was happening, in this quiet old house, and to her. For the baby sweetness, the dear, awkward grace of it, were so lovely, that Amy found herself worshiping this silent child; and although that small, curved mouth never spoke, the deep and shining eyes held a message. They sought her, they wanted her; and when she seemed most clearly to divine this, they shone with that light which, in a child's eyes, answers the mother glance alone.

She had once heard an Irishwoman, to whom she had ministered, murmur over and over an endearing name to the child she was soon to lose.

"All the others I have given, an' eased the heart of me with knowin' God had them. But this one! *Ah, Mhuire is thruagh!* This one's the *Savourneen Dheelish!*"

And with tears she told Amy the name's significance; the name given to the dearest of the dear, to the frail and fleeting—the Treasure-of-the-heart. That tenderest name of an elder tongue clung in Amy's memory; and, as she learned to look for the child's coming, to feel an aching loss and loneliness when it failed to appear, it came to her that this baby was *her Savourneen Dheelish*.

"Amy!" said her old friend and minister, with his whimsical smile. "Amy,

my dear, you grow radiant. Just to look at your eyes, and to know that such eyes may shine in such a world, is a solace to the heart. I've been preaching the beauty of holiness, my dear, all my life; now you're beginning to teach an old man the holiness of beauty."

For, in truth, something of the child's look had passed into Amy's; something deep, and sure, and full of knowledge and of peace; something, too, of its elusive and innocent mischief had touched her grave mouth into a fine, quick smile.

Once, when the child had followed her into her own room, which was its chosen playground, half in jest Amy took out a set of small dishes which had been hers. With a gesture of delight, the little one clapped its hands soundlessly. After that she learned how to play with her visitor. Seated on the floor, she opened her old picture books, turning them, page by page; placed dolls close to the small foot; or, obeying an unspoken command, rocked them in the cradles. And then, in soft whispers, she talked:

"Savourneen Dheelish! Come, come, always, always come! Ah, I love you so much, Treasure-of-the-heart! Do you know I've gotten to feel as if I were your mother? Feel? Why, I *knew* I am! Baby, you understand, don't you? You do?" Amy laughed, a soft and happy laugh. "Of course you do, Beautifulest!"

There was never a murmur of reply, never a touch of the small fingers; but there was that in the intent and listening look which assured her that the child understood; and, divining that Love had brought it, she prayed that Love might keep it.

And Love, indeed, kept it, for more than a year. Then the Savourneen Dheelish came but seldom. Always pale, it grew paler still, and smileless; always it looked at her, dumb, and as if in piteous entreaty. The small feet were too tired to dance beside her, the languid, lovely head drooped like a fading flower.

And she could do nothing. She could not even take her baby in her arms and

mother it. She grew wan and thin, suffering that terrible, age-old anguish which mothers, since the first mother, must endure.

During one of those weeks of absence, in a vain effort to comfort herself, she had painted the child's portrait in her pretty, clever water colors. But this presentment of its frail beauty tormented as well as comforted her; for perhaps her own loneliness and longing had crept into the work, to give the baby face a poignant wistfulness.

Twice more her baby came; each time more frail, fading, spiritlike. Then followed a time of absolute blankness. Mysteriously, inexplicably, as it had come, the Savourneen Dheelish had gone. She who was bereft of it was as one who wanders in a gray and grievous world.

Rumors of Gordon and his wife had, from time to time, crept back to the quiet home they had left. Stories of his gigantic undertakings, which terrified the simple minds of his old friends.

From Gordon himself Amy had not, for long, long months, heard anything. The daily papers kept the whole world advised of his whereabouts, however. Presently, other darker rumors crept into the papers; finally, open news of a divorce.

And then the flaring headlines chronicled his downfall. Gordon had overreached even himself. The pinnacle of gold on which he stood—always a treacherous and slippery foothold—melted as if by magic. Outwitted and outgeneraled by older and more cunning wolves than himself, once down, the pack proceeded to devour him.

He wrote home:

I have been ordered to lie quiet for a space or go to the bowwows. And I find I am really tired and need rest. You've seen the papers, so you'll know I'm coming alone, for my little girl died, right in the thick of things. Perhaps it's better so.

Tell auntie to have my little old room ready for me. It's good to have a quiet place to lie down, and think things over, till you're strong enough to get up and do 'em. And I'll be more than glad to see you again, Amy.

They looked at each other curiously,

almost with wonder, when they met. And, while he marveled at the serene, unclouded face, with its good and gentle beauty, she noted with a pang the ravages Success had made; and, oh, the mortal weariness of him!

He did not mention Leila; he seemed almost indifferent to her going from his life. It was only when Amy asked, hesitatingly, about the little girl, that his hard face softened.

"Of course I'd have liked a boy, that I could train to carry on my work and plans after me," he said frankly. "Still, when the girl came, I was glad. I knew she was frail, but I thought I might be able to keep her. Why, I had her under the constant care of one of the most famous children's specialists on earth.

"The day she was born I took an hour off and thought things over—mapped out my plans, you know. Then I started in to work for her. I was going to make a mighty big place in this world for that little girl! The princes of the earth weren't too good for my child."

He thought for a while abstractedly; as if he summoned before him the baby ghost.

"She was always the very quietest kiddy you ever saw," he went on. "Just sit still, and stare straight before her with big, clear eyes; sometimes she'd break into a little, low laugh, the nurse said, as if she'd seen or thought of something that pleased her. The nurse said it always made her feel as if the baby had a little happy secret.

"Then the doctors had to give her some harmless preparation to induce sleep, she'd been so restless, and everything else had failed. She'd sleep for hours, and then the nurse said she'd wake up, stare about her as if bewildered, and cry for her mother. Yet when Leila *did* have time to see her, it didn't seem to be Leila that she wanted at all. Leila never did care for children, you know, so, of course, she hadn't that way with them that some women have; and the baby seemed to know it.

"Both of us were really too busy, you

understand, to see much of the child. Of course, we tried to go when the nurse sent for us. It makes me feel bad now, to think that that poor, little thing might have been lonesome. I hadn't thought of that, you know. She had everything money could buy, of course, but—"

"But what she needed most: Love," said Amy. For the first time in her life her voice was stern.

"Love?" Gordon was amazed and resentful. "Love?" he repeated. "Good Lord, Amy, of course she had love—oceans of it! Why, a royal infant hadn't any better care. And didn't you just hear me tell you that I was working and planning for her, that I meant my girl to pick and choose from the princes of the earth? Of course, I loved her!"

Somehow, after that, the subject of the little Amy was tacitly avoided.

He took his wonted place in the household, and, as of old, Amy's presence insensibly soothed and softened him. He even began to look upon himself almost as a man at home, not as a conqueror in exile. And the calm simplicity of the life surrounding him acting like a tonic upon his strained nerves, he grew forceful again, gathered his strength, his effectiveness. Reassured, he began to plan his future campaigns, outlining that career with which to dazzle his generation.

"I've had my lesson," he told Amy. "Now I'm going back and teach my teachers theirs. I know 'em, now. This time, when I get the biggest, greatest thing on earth in my hands, I'll know how to hold on to it."

"And what," asked Amy mildly, "is the biggest, greatest thing, Gordon?"

"Power!" said he. And his face darkened.

She asked, as one who reflects:

"But you had Power in your hands once before, didn't you?"

"I had it," he breathed, and its cold light kindled in his glance.

But Amy said tranquilly:

"I shouldn't think the greatest thing on earth could be so quickly, so en-

tirely lost. I rather fancy the greatest thing *stays* by one."

"So?" Gordon was amused. "And what do you think it is, Amy?"

She hesitated. A slow pink crept into her clear cheek. A small and tender face, gold-haired, sweet, smiling, rose before her. Her eyes took on the look of the child's. She lifted her head.

"Love," she said bravely.

"A woman's answer!" He slighted it.

"A world's hope." Amy stood by her guns.

Gordon laughed unpleasantly.

"A fine lot *you* know about it!" he scoffed. "My good child, it blows away like thistledown before the first wind of trouble; it leaves, the minute you fail to meet all its demands. Why, Leila—"

"But you never, never, never *loved* Leila!" Amy spoke out suddenly, in a white heat. "You got from Leila just what you paid for, and deserved; a beautiful body, that you could deck out with the trappings of your victories; a flagstaff to hang your spoils on!"

"Selfish? Idle? Extravagant? Did you ever give her a half chance to be anything better? And so you're failures, both of you!"

"*You* successful? Gordon, Gordon! It isn't so much that you've missed the big things, the real things, the beautiful things; it's that you don't even know them! It's that *your* kind of success takes you into a far country, Gordon, and trains you to think that only the husks are worth while; and so you fight for the husks, and cast away from you the bread of your Father's House."

Was this Amy, shy, reticent Amy, this girl who looked as might an angel of love and of judgment? He caught his breath; and of a sudden his heart began to hammer in his breast.

"Why—why—Amy! *Amy!*"

But, suddenly afraid of his kindling eyes, terrified that she had been stung out of her calm reserve, Amy turned and fled to her room.

Delicately smiling, lonesome, lovely, the little water-color portrait looked down from her mantel with gray and sympathetic eyes.

"Savourneen Dheelish!" she cried. "Even you have left me!"

"Amy, dear, please mayn't I see you?" Gordon was at her door, his voice boyishly, impatiently eager.

Amy opened the door.

"I thought—I was afraid—" he began, and stopped, his sentence unfinished.

His eyes, traveling over the pleasant, familiar old room, had fallen upon the sketch. Abruptly he put Amy aside, and, going over to the mantel, seized the portrait.

"I never saw this before. Did Leila send it to you?"

"Why, no, I did it myself," said Amy.

"A copy, then?"

"No," said Amy.

She did not wish to be questioned. She would see that the little picture was put away under lock and key, after this, she reflected hurriedly.

"You mean to say you got this from life?" he asked incredulously. "But that's impossible. You never saw her."

"Yes, I got this—from life," said Amy, with a swift, mysterious smile. "It is—was"—the smile faded even more swiftly—"a little friend," she finished lamely.

But Gordon, holding the water color in his hand, said, with deep emotion:

"It is she. How could I mistake those eyes, that chin?"

"You mean?" Of a sudden Amy began to tremble.

"Amy!" He turned to her abruptly. "How strange! I never saw it before, but I do see it now—her resemblance to *you*. See the cleft chin, the curved mouth, the clear, gray eyes, the hair so pale, so fine! Why, I remember when you yourself had hair of just such baby gold. And you've both the same *look*—such a still and lonesome look, Amy!"

"Oh, my little child, my little child! It makes me feel as if I'd never really known you, as if I were only beginning to know you, to look on this!"

And then, out of a daze, Amy knew; and she began to stammer incoherently:

"Your child—Gordon's little girl—Amy—" She gave a piteous cry.

"And I wept and wondered—and

never guessed—why she couldn't come to me—ever any more. Oh, oh, oh, Savourneen Dheelish!"

"Amy!" he cried.

But Amy had fainted.

Later, she told him, with visible reluctance, a little—as little as she could. He looked from the indisputable portrait to her; both faces so pure, so fair, so innocent.

"You should have been her mother," he said shortly. After a pause, he added, as if the admission were wrung from him: "And she knew."

When he was ready to go, he spoke to her of that which had been growing upon him steadily since his return.

"I am free to offer you my name, Amy. And I need you, dear. There are times when I wonder if I haven't been needing you, just you, all along. There's a big career ahead of me; will you share it, Amy?"

Should she? From her babyhood she had loved him, so singly that out of the void his little child had crept to claim her mothering. Should she take advantage now of Leila's defection, and of those laws that said he was free to love her?

Ah, but did he?

This was not, she knew, the Gordon of her youth, the Gordon Who-might-have-been. That which she could give, this man had trained himself out of demanding. Only another Leila could with ease and grace bear Gordon's name—and trappings.

Used to paths of peace and pity, Amy shrank from the glaring, flinty Road o' Gold. She knew, intuitively, that on the Road o' Gold one grows deaf to soft calls, blind to the message in the sweet eyes of a child.

"No," she told him. "Oh, Gordon, no! I couldn't. It's too late to ask me. For one thing, there'd always be—Leila. And—and—the child, Gordon.

"Dear, I must be free, free to love you both. From the time I clung to your hand, Gordon, and so learned to walk, there's never, never been any one else. There'll never, never be any one else, Gordon."

He simply couldn't understand. When he had time to think it over, he reflected that her unreasonableness ought to show him that, with such whimsical notions and scruples, she could never be the shining social light that Leila was; and his wife would simply have to be a social success—that was part of the game. And as for this queer and upsetting hallucination about the child, it was unpleasant; it gave him the uncomfortable sensation of having somehow—he couldn't define just why, nor how—but of having somehow actually wronged these two Amys.

"The real trouble is that you're too good for me," he told her, a little crisply. "I dare say you're quite right to refuse me. As for loving me, why, if you'd ever loved me you wouldn't be so quick to say No now."

"But I couldn't if I didn't!" she protested enigmatically.

Gordon couldn't understand, and he said so tartly.

That night she went upstairs with hanging head, with lagging steps. Gordon had gone; and she knew he would not come back. She felt stripped, and spent, and desolate. Oh, why were things so hard?

The bright, clear moonlight streaming through her window showed her fair, bent head, her kneeling figure. It showed, too, presently, in full and sharp relief, a small, fair presence, all in mistiest white, dainty white, with wonderful handwork, such as on a time Amy had made for another Amy. No longer pale and tired now, the tiny shape, but alive, alert, radiant, quivering. In the glowing face the deep eyes shone luminously.

The woman divined rather than saw. The prayer died upon her lips, to break into a sobbing cry:

"Savourneen Dheelish! Oh, my child, my own, own, own little child!"

Upon her outstretched hand fell the merest, barest, lightest touch, the touch as of a passing and caressing breeze. The baby lips moved, formed themselves exquisitely into a word:

"Mother!"



The Society Reminiscences of FREDERICK TOWNSEND MARTIN

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PASSING OF THREE SOCIETY LEADERS
—THE DELEVAN HOTEL FIRE.

AFTER a long walking tour through the Tyrol with my good friend, Mr. Sands, and another long visit to the Castle Balmacaan, in Scotland, I returned to New York in November, much benefited in health, and ready for another long season. The year, however, was made notable by a number of occurrences, some sad and some tragic, that cast something of a shadow over it for me.

Three prominent people who had devoted their lives to the social world died. These were Mr. Ward McAllister, Henry Le Grand Cannon, and Mrs. Paran Stevens. They were characters whose place it was impossible to fill. There has never been any one like them in the social world, neither have I come across their like in any country that I have visited. They were so full of life and activity, and kept so to the front, that one could never realize that the hand of death would sweep them away; yet they passed, and there was only a short interval between the death of each.

What impressed me most was that New York was growing so rapidly, and society becoming so vast, that the death of these three seemed merely as a ripple on the vast surface of the social world, retarding only a little the progress of each day's social doings.

My brother, and his wife, and myself went to the funeral of Mr. Ward McAllister in Grace Church. I counted only five of the representatives of the Patriarchs—though he had slaved for years and years in the interest of this organization and its wonderfully organized balls. It will be remembered that each of the one hundred Patriarchs chosen from New York society subscribed one hundred dollars for the dances, and each subscriber was entitled to send a certain number of invitations to friends. They sent their list in to Mr. McAllister, and he would approve it. When any prominent stranger from a foreign country was visiting the city, there would always be a great consultation as to whether or no he was worthy of an invitation to the Patriarch ball, but Mr. McAllister never spared any pains in looking up these names.

The general public crowded to his funeral, and also the great band of musicians that had played at all the Patriarch balls was there. The leader had asked permission from the family that they might play for the last time for the funeral of their chief. The altar was so crowded with masses of flowers that even the cross could scarcely be seen. Yet there was only a handful of society people there. One could not help but feel that curiosity was the incentive which had brought together most of the crowd. It impressed me very deeply to remark that, after a life spent in working and toiling for the fashionable element of the great city, the funeral of

this man, whose one ambition seemed always to get up some entertainment to amuse others, was regarded by the general public more as an entertainment itself than as a sacred and mournful ceremony.

A few weeks after we had arrived in New York, late in November, my brother Bradley and his wife were plunged into great sorrow by the death of their eldest son, and when the gay season of the holidays arrived they felt that they wanted to retire from New York for a short time. Consequently, we all went up to our native town of Albany, which has a splendid winter climate. On our arrival we put up at a hotel called The Kenmore, and were given rooms very high up in the building. Mrs. Bradley Martin had a terror of fire, and said it was impossible to remain there—that we must find rooms in another hotel. At this we went to the old Delevan House, the historic hotel of Albany, and found excellent rooms. I then went out to dine, leaving my sister-in-law and brother to dine in the hotel.

While I was thus having dinner with friends in another part of the town, I heard the fire bell ring, and we all went out to see where the blaze was. Following the engines, we arrived, to my horror, at the Delevan House. Here a huge crowd had collected, watching volumes of smoke belching from the windows. The darkness was lit by an occasional glare and flicker, and already, amid the shouts of the terrified guests, one heard the ominous crackling of flames, and the occasional clatter of glass falling to the pavement as the windows far aloft burst into fragments.

Although four or five lines of hose were playing upon the building, they seemed to have little effect. The hissing of the water was soon drowned by the roar of the flames as they burst out in full fury.

My brother and sister-in-law were dining in their apartment when they heard the alarm. The shock of the coincidence, their leaving one hotel on purpose to escape all risk of fire, only to be drawn by fate into the flames of another

hotel, was quickly followed by their horror at finding that all the corridors of the hotel were already filled with smoke. The cries of distracted women and the shouts of the men only added to their confusion. My brother and his wife owed their lives to the presence of mind of a man whose name they will never know, and who, in passing, cried out to Mrs. Martin:

"Here, lady! Drop on your knees and crawl. Keep your face close to the floor, and follow me."

He was in front, and the three crawled along the corridor until they came to the staircase, and thus found their way down the stairs, never knowing from one instant to another as they thus descended whether the staircase was still entire, or whether the first flights had not already fallen into the flames. At last they reached the door which gave on the street, and were safe, just as the stairway down which they came crashed into the seething flames.

It will be remembered that seventeen persons lost their lives in the fire.

As for myself, I lost all my luggage, everything except the evening clothes that I was wearing.

CHAPTER XXII.

MRS. BRADLEY MARTIN'S GREAT FANCY DRESS BALL.

Before closing these reminiscences, which have necessarily held far more personal detail than it was my desire to give them, I must tell briefly of one of the most-talked-of fancy dress balls given in New York in recent years.

This was given by Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin at the Waldorf-Astoria on February 10, 1897. The famous hotel was chosen for the affair, as no private house would accommodate the nine hundred guests entertained that night. The invitations were sent out, just in time for people to make their arrangements, as Mrs. Martin expressly desired that all costumes should be purchased in New York, rather than Paris, in consideration of the slack trade conditions at home at that time.

This doubtless helped to stimulate trade, as many of the shops sold out all their beautiful brocades and artistic odds and ends, which otherwise would have come from abroad.

It seemed to me cruel that any one with such a noble heart as my sister-in-law should have been attacked by demagogues because of this fancy ball.

Shortly before the affair one of my family met Theodore Roosevelt in the street, and said to him:

"I am so pleased that you and your wife are coming to this ball."

"Oh," replied the future president of the United States, "my wife's coming, because she's got her costume ready; but as police commissioner *my* duty that night will be in the street, watching the police."

Thus the hero of San Juan spent that night conscientiously doing his duty, superintending the five hundred police that were selected to keep order among the crowds attracted by the ball.

In describing this event I could bring it better to the minds of my readers by reference to the descriptions of the great fêtes of Louis XIV. at Versailles. Though not arranged on such a great scale as the fêtes of Versailles, the eight or nine hundred guests at the Bradley Martin ball had been careful in the selection of their costumes to follow every historical detail. As an instance I may say that Miss Brice's costume was actually copied from a portrait by Velasquez, which hangs in the Louvre.

All authorities agreed in declaring that this ball was the most sumptuous and costly ever seen in America. It even outshone the Schermerhorn ball, given fifty years previously, the great dance held in honor of the Prince of Wales, and the Vanderbilt ball.

The scene within the ballroom was dazzling. The white and gold panels of the Waldorf Hotel gleamed through ancient tapestries, foliage, plants, and tropical flowers, and the broad wall mirrors sent back in electric rays reflections of beauty and wealth such as had rarely been gathered together in one ballroom. All was gorgeous and monarchical. To three Washingtons there were a score

of Louis Quinzes, and for one Puritan Maid whole groups of Marie Antoinettes, Madame Pompadours, and Madame Maintenons.

Jewels representing untold wealth glittered everywhere. Some single buttons were worth thousands of dollars, and one could gaze upon tiaras and necklaces that had cost fabulous sums of money.

The South, especially Florida, sent some of its rarest blossoms, and the display of orchids and American Beauty roses exceeded probably anything of the kind ever seen in this city. The small ballroom, where Mrs. Martin received her guests, was superbly decorated with lilies of the valley, white and pink roses, orchids, and trailing vines. The dais on which she stood was covered with rich red plush, its background being composed of rare old tapestry, garlanded with roses.

The music balcony, similarly decorated, looked like a huge box of flowers, while the café and winter garden, at all times pleasant features of the Waldorf Hotel, were charmingly set off with beautiful roses, acacias, palms, and ferns. One hundred and twenty-five supper tables had been arranged for the guests, each bearing a gilt flower basket.

Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin received their guests at the entrance to the ballroom.

Attired as Mary Stuart, Mrs. Bradley Martin wore a most magnificent costume. The long-trained skirt of ruby velvet, embroidered in gold, was looped in front over a silver chain, showing a skirt of silver and white-brocaded satin, ornamented with white satin panels, embroidered in silver and gold. The bodice, worn with a jeweled girdle, was made with square neck, ornamented by a high collar, and with sleeves puffed at the top, and ornamented with precious stones above the network of pearls which covered them. The headdress of ruby velvet, covered with a network of pearls, held in place a veil of dainty white tulle, spangled with pearls. Her ornaments were magnificent diamonds and rubies.

Mr. Bradley Martin, as Louis XV.,

wore a suit of crushed strawberry satin, richly embroidered in gold, with jabot and cuffs of duchesse lace, and with waistcoat of pearl-gray satin embroidered in gold, in a design of flowers, and with buttons of royal diamonds.

The dance began with the *quadrille d'honneur*. It was arranged by Mrs. Astor, who, however, did not dance in it. The following ladies and gentlemen took part:

Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Orme Wilson, Mrs. Whitney Warren, Mrs. Lee Teller, the Misses Gerry, Madeline Cutting, Lena Morton; and Messieurs Wadsworth Hitchcock, Van Alen, John Jacob Astor, Van Cortlandt, Harry Lehr, Lisenpenard Stewart, and Mr. Frederick Townsend Martin.

The triple figures went remarkably well, but at times it seemed as though American vivacity with difficulty restrained itself to the slow but stately measures of a century ago. At the termination of the third figure, the scene was the most picturesque and striking of the whole evening. A pretty court dance by débutantes followed, and then the beautiful Louis XVI. quadrille for young married women and their cavaliers, arranged by Mrs. Baylies.

Mrs. John Jacob Astor was prevented by illness from taking part, but her place was filled by Miss Edith Hull.

Then Mrs. Bronson's quadrille was danced.

After these came the regular supper, which, however, was actually served all through the evening. The menu, of course, bore the great American delicacies, terrapin à la Baltimore and canard canvasback. After supper the cotillion was danced, beginning about two o'clock. Mr. Elisha Dyer led off with Mrs. Martin. It was an exceedingly pretty affair, only some twenty couples being called out at once, so the costumes were displayed to the utmost advantage. Favors were mostly trifles in silver, such as match boxes, tablets, book holders, et cetera, together with directoire sticks, bonbonnières, and armorial bearings.

Mrs. Astor wore the costume designed

by Carolus Duran for her portrait painted some years ago. It was of sixteenth-century Venetian pattern, in dark-blue velvet. The stomacher was composed entirely of diamonds, while her hair and dress glittered with pearls and gems.

Mrs. Oliver Belmont, mother of the Duchess of Marlborough, and, as Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, the giver of the last grand costume ball, wore a merveilleuse dress of white moiré, sprayed with small baskets of pink roses, which were divided by narrow strips of pink satin. With this costume went an enormous bonnet, with poke crown and brim of grass-green chiffon, decked with clusters of pink roses.

Mr. Belmont's costume was of Henry IV. period. Over a dress of black velvet he wore a full suit of armor inlaid with gold, and valued at ten thousand dollars. He also wore the Order of Saint Esprit in jewels, together with a jeweled sword.

Mrs. William Allen, as Peg Woffington, appeared in pompadour silk, with a Watteau train of white gauze, and corsage trimmed with rows of pearls.

Mrs. James Beekman, as Lady Teazle, was in a gown of rich brocade, which was once worn by an ancestress.

Mrs. Henry Burnett also wore an old ancestral petticoat of satin as the Marquise De Suffern.

Sir Bache Cunard belonged to the court of Louis XVI., while Lady Cunard, in a superb costume, was the Duchesse De Destantes.

Miss Edith Devereux Clapp impersonated the Duchess of Devonshire, with powdered wig and curls and costly jewels.

Miss Anne Morgan, daughter of J. Pierpont Morgan, attracted much attention in her wonderful Pocahontas costume. It was made by Indians, in real leather, with a war bonnet and moccasins correct in every detail.

Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, as Marie Antoinette, had a bodice lined with diamonds, a pearl necklace, and gems in her hair.

The Clown and The Clergyman



BY
THOMAS
ADDISON



T was a hot evening late in July. A taxicab was at the door, and the man was ringing for admittance. Horace Atkins was on the point of closing his steamer trunk when a sudden impulse seized him. He did not stop to fathom it. He crossed the room to a big theatrical trunk, and from it dug out a clown's dress and a make-up box. These he threw into the smaller trunk and locked it. Five minutes later he was being whirled away to the Portland boat; and then it was that a puzzled frown drew down his brows.

"Now, I wonder," he asked himself, "why I brought that rig along?"

Apparently he could find no answer to the question, and, with a shrug, dismissed it from mind. He had acted on one of those unaccountable impulses that stand revealed only in the light of later events.

Horace Atkins was a clown, and stood high in his line. He had made thousands of men and women laugh, and a hundred thousand children. Many a good man has gone to his grave with far less to his credit. Atkins was known to fame as "Billy Merry." Possibly there were not a dozen persons who knew him by his baptismal name. In summer, with the circus, he earned one hundred and fifty dollars a week; in winter, in vaudeville, his salary was a hundred a week. Out of costume, he was simply a bright,

frank, well-spoken young man who had traveled the world over and feared no man. And, like all circus folk of the better class, he was clean, upright, and thrifty.

Horace was taking an enforced vacation. He was recovering from a serious illness. It had laid him low during the Boston engagement of his show, and he had but just been discharged from the doctor's care. Now he was going to Maine in search of tonic air and the prodigal repose of a country town. When restored in strength, he would go West and rejoin the circus.

As the Portland boat passed out beyond Fort Warren, the freshening southeast breeze struck gratefully upon the heat-worn passengers scattered around the forward promenade deck. But it brought misfortune to a girl who was standing a few feet away from the port rail, against which Horace Atkins was idly leaning. She gave a cry of dismay, and in the same breath Horace was lunging wildly at her hat as it went sailing by him over the side.

His fingers closed on a white ostrich plume—the rest of the contraption went scudding down to a watery grave. For an instant both the girl and the man stood looking ruefully at the bit of feathery salvage.

"By George, that's too bad!" exclaimed Horace, and with this presented the plume to its owner.

The young woman bravely concealed

her distress. She seemed to be quite alone.

"At any rate," she smiled, "you saved the only thing of value on the hat. Thank you ever so much."

She was turning away to the saloon door when Horace, with a quick step, was at her side. He liked the plucky way in which she had accepted her mishap. He knew that to a woman the loss of her headgear was little short of calamity—almost to be ranked with disease and sudden death.

"Say," he abruptly questioned, "what are you going to do for a lid—" He caught himself, confused, and added: "I mean, something to wear up there?"

He pointed to her wind-tossed yellow hair, while he pulled the door open for her. She stepped inside, and when he had followed faced him laughingly.

"I am going to see what the stewardess can find for me," she said. "I can't go all the way to Linthrop without a—a lid."

The young fellow's eyes lighted up. "You are going to Linthrop? So am I. Never mind the stewardess, unless — Say, did you save any skewers? I mean hatpins?"

The girl shook her head.

"No. Everything went except what you saved." She mournfully regarded the ostrich feather.

"All right," spoke up Horace cheerfully. "Now, where's your room? What's the number?"

She studied him a moment before replying, looking him squarely in the eye. It was a straightforward, honest brown eye that returned her gaze. And so, covertly amused at the authoritative air he had assumed, she indicated a door across the way, and said:

"That is it—number two hundred and ten."

"Well, go to it, and wait till I come," commanded Horace. "I'll fix you up O. K. I've got it all doped out."

Taking consent for granted, he swung off down the cabin. The girl watched the well-knit figure making its way through the crowd. There was something about it that inspired con-

fidence, a sense of protection. Not that she felt the need of protection; she was used to taking care of herself; but it was a pleasant sensation, just the same, and she was disposed to enjoy it. And then the spirit of adventure had breathed upon her, was dancing before her eyes like a will-o'-the-wisp. She would follow it a little way, at least.

So she went into her stateroom, and smoothed out her hair, and did things to her face and hands after the manner of woman from princess down to peasant. When presently a triple knock sounded on her door—imperative as the summons of the law—she opened it, and stood upon the threshold with all the sweet humility of an Esther seeking favor with the king.

Horace held out to her, not a scepter, but a roughrider hat banded with a silver cord. With this he offered a hatpin. Its head was a hideous knob of brass and glass.

"It's a brand-new bonnet," he remarked. "I bought it to loaf around in at Linthrop. The pin I got from the stewardess. Don't strike me—I did the best I could. They caught the man who made it, and sent him up for life. And, say, my name is Horace Atkins. Single, solitary, and sick—though I'm getting better every minute."

The girl responded quickly:

"I am Miss Kitty Randall, and"—she laughed lightly—"I never felt better in my life."

"Good!" said Horace, and reaching out he seized her hand and shook it cordially. Then he added: "If you'll just pull the brim of that cady down on one side and shove it up on the other you'll look like a four-time winner. I'll wait for you while you put it on."

He watched her as she stepped to the mirror opposite and adjusted the hat to her head. She found it becoming, and so did he. She could see it in his eyes.

"Now," he suggested, when she had come out into the saloon, "what do you say to something to eat?"

At this she shrank a little from him.

"Oh, I had something before we

left," she hastily declared. "A hearty supper."

"Then that's all right," he answered evenly. "I wish I could say the same. I haven't tackled anything heavier than an egg shake and a bunch of grapes for five weeks. Gastritis. Just over it. That's why I'm going to Linthrop—to rest up and get a strangle hold on a piece of beef again."

They had gone out on deck, and had now found seats on the lee side, abaft the beam. The sun had set, and the girl looked at him curiously in the waning light. Where had she seen him before?

"Have you ever been to Linthrop?" she asked.

"Not guilty! All I know is what Jim Peters told me. He's a chap I met in Boston. When he heard I was hunting a quiet spot he came to me and said: 'It's Linthrop for yours, old sport. It's so quiet up there that if you drop a pin on Main Street in the rush hours it'll set all the dogs to barking.'"

Horace chuckled reminiscently, and then went on:

"I guess I'll get the rest cure, all right, in Linthrop; and Peters says the fishing is good, only everything is so everlasting quiet you can hear the worm wiggle on your hook; and if you scratch your ear it sounds like a horse running over a bridge. He says that when he came back to the city it was a week before he dared to raise his voice above a whisper for fear they'd think he was calling the police."

"Yes?" said Miss Randall, struggling with some secret source of merriment. "And what did Mr. Peters say about the people themselves?"

Her companion grinned widely.

"Why, Peters says he didn't meet any of 'em. They were all asleep. There were only two ways of waking 'em up, and he shied at both. One was to set the meetinghouse afire, and the other was to make love to Miss Tabitha Brown—whatever the deuce she is. Peters wouldn't tell me about her; he wanted me to find out for myself."

Kitty Randall threw back her head,

and laughed until Horace grew uneasy.

"Put me next," he demanded. "I can do a trick or two in that line myself."

"Just a minute, please," gasped Kitty, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief. Then, when she had recovered her composure: "I knew it was coming. I knew your friend wouldn't fail to mention Miss Tabitha Brown. Nobody who has been to Linthrop ever does fail to mention her. She is a very prominent person—quite the big personage of the town. You see, I know her well. I've been passing my vacations in Linthrop for years. I go there for rest myself. I'm a working girl—a stenographer—and I get pretty well worn out by the time my holidays come around."

"Sure!" assented Horace. "But about this woman. What's the joke? Let me in on it."

"Oh, I couldn't!" mirthfully exclaimed the girl. "I agree with Mr. Peters. You must wait and see Miss Tabitha Brown. I couldn't begin to do her justice. Aunt Tabby I call her—everybody does—and I'll only say she's a little old maid that you could blow away with half a breath. She lives in a big house whose back garden runs right down to Lake Anabasca—and that makes me think! If you could get a room with her you would be much better off than at the hotel. She's a famous cook."

"That listens good to me," commented Horace. "I've been dreaming of that country hotel—mostly nightmares. I've traveled about a bit, and know what it is to sleep on a mattress stuffed with an iron grating, and eat steak cut from a trunk strap. But does she take boarders?"

Kitty hesitated, and could he have seen her face clearly he would have noted its rising color.

"No," she said at length, "Aunt Tabby doesn't exactly take boarders. The Methodist minister lives with her—a young man about your age, I should say——"

"I am twenty-seven," vouchsafed Horace.

"Well, Arthur—Mr. Lomas—is twenty-nine. He boards with Aunt Tabby, and she takes me in when I come. Perhaps I can manage it for you, too. I am in your debt, and I hate to owe anything."

"That settles it," declared the other, with emphasis. "We get into Linthrop at nine-thirty to-morrow morning. By ten o'clock you won't owe me anything but your blessing, for you're going to fix things for me with Aunt Tabby Brown. If you don't," he threatened, "I'll marry her before night, and turn you and the preacher out to grass."

At this Miss Randall was swept into another gale of merriment out of all proportion to Mr. Atkins' frivolous remark. Whereupon that gentleman wisely turned the subject into other channels.

Youth makes quick friendships. When, next morning, the train drew up at Linthrop, the village idlers propped around against the station house in various stages of dilapidation might well have thought that Kitty and Horace had known each other from cradle days. There was an absence of formality between them that argued the presence of a thorough understanding.

This, at least, was the way it struck the perceptions of the Reverend Arthur Lomas, who was on hand to welcome Kitty. The eagerness with which he had waited for the train to pull in gave way to a look of pained surprise. He came forward a little uncertainly.

"There's Arthur!" joyously cried the girl, and hastened to meet him. Horace followed, bearing her suit case and his own.

Kitty introduced the young men, briefly explaining to Mr. Lomas the chance that had brought about her acquaintance with Horace. The reverend gentleman showed a measure of relief, but glanced at the roughrider hat with a disapproving eye. In his opinion, it was frightfully unbecoming.

Kitty had turned from them to give orders about the trunks to a tousled-

looking citizen in overalls. This errand had carried her to the farther end of the platform. Now she wheeled and beckoned to her friends.

"Come along," she called out, in a flutter of excitement. "Don't let's wait here all day."

Mr. Atkins picked up the suit cases. Mr. Lomas politely insisted on sharing the burden, and Mr. Atkins at length obliged him by passing over the suit case that was not Miss Randall's. During this little interchange of civilities the lady had jumped down from the platform and was standing in the dusty roadway impatiently awaiting them. As they came up to her she said to Horace:

"It's only five minutes' walk. Look—you can see the house from here—that one over there by the lake. The one with the two big trees in front. Come along! I'm dying for you to meet Aunt Tabby."

The house stood back from the street, guarded from it by a white picket fence. The minister unlatched the gate, and, as Kitty and Horace passed in, remained behind to fasten it. The front door was wide open, and as the two marched up to it a figure suddenly appeared in the entrance, at the sight of which Horace nearly dropped the suit case.

"Lonesome Larry!" he exclaimed under his breath, indulging in a pet expression.

A gurgling sound escaped the girl at his elbow. Then "Aunt Tabby!" she cried, and flew up the steps and into the arms of the most stupendous woman Horace Atkins had ever seen out of a side show.

Miss Tabitha Brown was, as Miss Randall had truthfully remarked the night before, "a very prominent person." And, as Mr. Peters had opined, it certainly would have waked up not only Linthrop, but towns for miles around, had any man possessed the courage to make love to her. Setting the meetinghouse afire would have been a trivial performance compared with it.

The immensity of Miss Brown was awe-inspiring. She was not just a com-

mon fat woman—a mass of quivering blubber. She was a giantess of solid, well-proportioned flesh. She filled the doorway, and towered up to within an inch or two of the lintel; and her voice when it issued from her was a rolling, sonorous bass.

"Well, Kitty, so you're back again!" she boomed. "And who's this you've brought with you? You never said anything about him in your letter."

She fixed a pair of snapping black orbs on Horace, regarding him unsmilingly, distrustfully even. He noted now that her hair was raven black, streaked with gray, and that something very like a mustache darkened her lip.

"He's a friend I made on the boat, Aunt Tabby—Mr. Horace Atkins," said the girl appealingly. "I'll tell you about it later. He's been quite ill—gastritis—and I knew they'd poison him at the hotel, so I told him I thought you would take him in."

The minister had come up the walk, and was looking on with twinkling eyes. Horace stood at the foot of the steps. Miss Brown loomed above him, frowning ominously.

"Poison!" she bayed. "It would poison a rat to eat the cooking over there." She nodded in a northeasterly direction, where lay the most populous portion of the town. "But what do you know about this young feller, Kitty? I ain't taking in every stray that comes along."

Here Horace spoke up boldly:

"She don't know a thing about me, Miss Brown, except what I've told her. How could she—unless she's a mind reader?"

A slow smile crept over the lady's mammoth features. She moved back into the hall, and, holding up a huge forefinger, wagged it toward herself.

"Come in," she invited. "I'll have a talk with you, and then we'll see. You go up to your old room, Kitty. Arthur'll fetch your bag."

Miss Randall obediently followed instructions, but halfway up the stairs she paused, and, peeping over the railing at Horace, went through a little

pantomime expressive of rapturous delight.

The colossal spinster led the way into the parlor. She did not waddle; she strode along at the pace of a grenadier.

"Everything is shored up," she remarked cavernously, "and the flooring is two-inch oak. No danger of dropping through into the cellar."

She deposited herself in a throne-like hickory chair near the window, and Horace—feeling very much like a small boy about to be disciplined by his teacher—sat down facing her.

Miss Brown opened fire on him abruptly.

"You answer me some questions," she ordered. "Is Horace Atkins your real name?"

"It is," said the owner of it meekly.

"What's your business?"

"I travel for a concern that makes rings."

"Married?"

"No, ma'am."

"How long are you going to stay?"

"Until I'm strong enough to work again."

"Did Kitty Randall tell you anything about me?"

Horace looked into the black eyes boring into him; then suddenly showed two rows of strong white teeth.

"She said," he replied slowly, "you were a little old maid that I could blow away with half a breath."

A rumbling came from somewhere within Miss Brown's anatomy, and grew in volume until it burst from her lips in a thunderous laugh.

"You're honest," she informed him. "You can stay. Come here and shake hands with me."

Horace got up, and, going over to her, took hold of what seemed to him a hot-water bag divided into phalanges. This ceremony performed, he resumed his seat, not knowing what else was expected of him.

"Nobody puts on any lugs with me," announced Miss Brown. "Everybody calls me Aunt Tabby. You'll do it, too. And I don't 'mister' anybody your size and age."

"I'm on, Aunt Tabby," agreed the young man.

The other nodded ponderously.

"You've got sense, Horace," she observed. "Now, I'm going to tell you a few things, and then you can hang up your hat and stay as long as you like. It'll cost you six dollars a week, and you'll git something to eat that won't poison you."

"You can't begin on me too soon, Aunt Tabby," returned Horace thankfully.

"I'm Kitty's stepaunt," rolled out Miss Brown. "Her mother married my brother when Kitty was twelve. She's twenty-two now. He wasn't like me, my brother. Just an ordinary man. I'm a freak. I'm forty-five years old, six foot two inches tall, weigh three hundred and twenty pounds, and can lick any man in town."

"I'd gamble on it," said Horace.

"I'm a freak," repeated Miss Brown, with evident gusto, "and my brother was a fool. Our father left us five thousand dollars apiece. Bub married Kitty's mother, lost his money, and died. I didn't marry—you can grin if you want to—and I invested my money in the oilcloth mills down by the railroad. To-day I'm the richest single woman in the county, and I come pretty near to running things around here to suit myself."

"Put me down for another bet on that," requested Horace.

The giantess looked at him approvingly.

"I'm glad you're here," she pealed forth. "Mebbe you can prod up Arthur Lomas some. He needs it. Did Kitty tell you about him? No, I guess not. Girls don't talk about their fellers to other fellers."

"She's engaged to him?" asked Horace quickly.

"No; that's the trouble. He's a preacher. His salary is six hundred a year. That's eleven dollars and fifty-three cents a week. Kitty makes twenty dollars a week in a State Street broker's office. How's a man to ask a girl to marry him when he's making only half what she makes? And how's any girl

outside a lunatic asylum to be expected to marry a man whose pay ain't but little more'n enough to keep a dog from starving?"

With this question, the lady, demanding an answer, leveled a finger the size of a Colt's forty-five at the young man facing her. Horace threw up both hands.

"Don't shoot!" he begged. "I give it up."

"You ain't going to give it up," threatened the other. "You're going to help me figger it out. Arthur's a good boy, only he's got started wrong. There ain't no money in preaching, and never will be; and as for the reward hereafter he's counting on, I say a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Horace was irreligious enough to acquiesce in this, and Aunt Tabby pursued her theme:

"Arthur's got the brains to git out and make a decent living instead of wasting his time trying to save the souls of the tough old pirates that live around here. They don't want to be saved; if they did, they'd pay living wages to the chap who tackled the job. When a man has got a bad tooth he goes to the dentist, and pays him a good price to fix it up; but when he's got a bad heart he expects the preacher to tag around after him and beg him for the privilege of working on it for nothing. Bah!"

Miss Brown boomed out her disgust with the report of a ten-pounder. Horace imagined he could feel the wind of the shot as it hurtled by.

"How can I help?" he inquired curiously. "I'm game for almost any old thing."

"Git after Arthur. Talk to him. Tell him he's a fool. I've done it till I'm sick of it. Why, he's got up a patent—a thing for sealing letters by electricity. The working model's down to New York, in somebody's office, being tried out, they claim; but it's been there six months now, and he can't draw no satisfaction out of them people. He ought to git a pile of money for it, and cut loose from this preaching business. But there it sticks, and here he sticks,

and I'm stuck to know how to move either of 'em. I've been egging him on to go to New York, but he says he can't afford it, and he's too proud to let me help him—so the fat's all in the fire."

Horace thought a moment; then he said:

"You find out that concern's address for me, Aunt Tabby. I'll write to a man I know in New York who'll stir 'em up a little. He's a lawyer."

Satisfaction spread itself over Miss Brown's mountainous features.

"I'll say it again," she rumbled: "I'm glad you've come, Horace. Money makes the mare go, in church and out. If Arthur sells his patent and feels he's just got to keep on preaching—why, there won't be no harm in it then. He can afford to peddle out salvation free gratis for nothing. But now—ugh!"

Miss Brown heaved herself up on her feet, at which signal Horace also rose. He felt dwarfed by comparison with her. His showman's eye dwelt appraisingly upon the great bulk of the woman, and estimated her drawing attraction. It startled him when, with a chuckle which sounded like a growl, she appeared to read his thought.

"Think I ought to jine the circus, don't you?" she demanded.

"You'd make a hit, that's a cinch," frankly confessed the young man.

He heard a laugh, and, looking around, saw Kitty Randall standing in the door. There was an expression on her face which no man might read aright. It was mocking, wistful, daring, tender—a blending of all these stirred with mischief.

"You've been listening, Kitty Randall!" accused Miss Brown.

"Only half a minute, Aunt Tabby—while I was tiptoeing down the stairs," defended the girl. She turned to Horace. "She's afraid of me; that's why she doesn't join the circus. She knows I'd never go to see her. I can't abide the crowds, and—and the hideous, painted clowns."

She made a little grimace—lifting her shoulders and crinkling her nose—and Horace, with the acumen of his sex in matters feminine, perceived that

he had done well to keep his business to himself.

"Take him around and show him the place, Kitty," ordered Miss Brown. "We're going to have early dinner."

"Come along, sir," said Miss Randall imperiously. "I see you have passed your examination, and are one of us. It rained last night, and Arthur is bailing out the boat. We are going for a row."

Drowsy days passed for Horace, each bringing with it a greater measure of strength and an ever-growing appetite. Aunt Tabby's omelets and pop-overs and custards and broiled chicken would have raised a man from the dead, he verily believed.

As for Aunt Tabby, she appeared to look upon Horace's intervention in the affair of the letter sealer as the saving clause in Arthur's scroll of destiny. For Horace had received word from the New York lawyer—whom he had privately assured of his fee—that he would force an issue with the men who had the model in charge. They were keeping this a secret from the minister for the present in the hope of a joyful surprise later on.

Yet, shrewd as was the estimable, if somewhat overgrown, virgin, it did not seem to occur to her that given one young woman and two young men thrown constantly together, certain heart complications were apt to follow. She had settled it in her mind that Arthur was to marry Kitty, and she considered the presence of this other pleasant person on the scene as merely contributory to the end she had in view.

What Kitty's thoughts were she herself could not have told. They were in a jumble, and she was too extravagantly enjoying herself to pause to analyze them. She distributed, as she thought, her favors impartially; but the Reverend Mr. Lomas, looking upon her with a lover's jealous eye, was mournfully convinced that the larger share fell to Horace. The latter, having before him always the picture of Kitty's disgust with his calling, and being a very decent chap, kept his fancy for her bridled

to repression. He assumed toward her an attitude of privileged friendship, and his words were in consonance with the rôle. This aloofness, had he but known it, was the one thing needed to make him desirable in the maiden's eyes.

And so matters stood as Kitty's three weeks' vacation drew to a close. It was Wednesday, and she was to leave for home on Saturday. Horace had not yet decided when he would leave. He felt fit again, and ready for work, but lingered on. He told himself, and told Miss Brown, that he wished to see the New York affair closed up before he went away, and he had even wired that morning to the lawyer to rush the matter through.

Horace really was desirous of helping the clergyman to better his worldly condition. He liked him. He was a sturdy, open-hearted, serious-minded fellow, doing his duty as he saw it, and preaching the gospel as he found it. Horace had not been able to summon the courage to talk to him in the strain indicated by Miss Brown. The man was too evidently sincere, too much in earnest in his beliefs. How was a circus clown to convince a priest of God that he was engaged in a futile task?

Arthur Lomas came home that Wednesday afternoon at four o'clock, and, drawing Horace aside, suggested that they two take a try at the bass along the reeds on the west shore of the lake.

"Are we going to leave Kitty out of this?" inquired Horace. Kitty was as keen on fishing as either of them.

"I—I thought," hesitated the other, "that you wouldn't mind if just we two—"

"Oh, sure!" assented Horace promptly. "Come on." He saw the bass were but an excuse; Arthur wished to speak with him privately.

The minister took the oars, and pulled up the lake in silence. Horace sat in the stern, drawing thoughtfully on his pipe. When presently they had rounded a bend in the shore, and the house was lost to view, the minister rested on his oars.

"Horace, my friend," he said, in his

quiet way, "though a man love a woman hopelessly—"

"Hold up, there!" interrupted Horace harshly. "You mean Kitty Randall. How do you know you love her hopelessly?"

"I feel that it is so, Horace."

"Has she told you it is so?"

"No. I have not given her the opportunity. I have nothing to offer her. I am too poor. And it is you she prefers. She shows it in many ways."

Horace carefully knocked the heel out of his pipe before replying to this. Then he said tersely:

"Well—go on."

The minister complied:

"Kitty has no father, no brother, no man relative near enough to represent her; and so, Horace, I am claiming by right of my love for her, and by my prayers for her happiness, the privilege a brother would have. I—"

"In other words," broke in Horace brutally, "if I love her, you want to know something about me—whether I'm all right. Is that it?"

"Yes, Horace."

The eyes of the two men met squarely.

"Well, I do love her. But until this minute I wasn't dead sure of it."

The clergyman let his eyes fall. When he lifted them again they were clear and calm. He was about to speak when Horace forestalled him.

"Wait! I am not going to ask her to marry me," he said deliberately, "because I, too, have nothing to offer her."

Arthur Lomas drew the oars athwart, and, leaning on them, regarded his companion. His heart had leaped in him at the words he had heard, and yet pity struggled with his joy.

"You mean," he asked, "that poverty also holds you back? I imagined you were making a good salary."

"It isn't a question of money; it's a question of business—the same as with you. Look here, Arthur, I am going to talk to you straight—about you and Kitty and me. I claim the same privilege you did, and for the same reason."

"Surely," conceded Arthur, but with

a little quickening of the breath. "You have the right."

"I'll dispose of my own case first," said Horace. "In a way, I've been masquerading up here. I am Horace Atkins, all right; but, say, have you ever heard of Billy Merry, the circus clown? His ring mug has been in about every paper in the country."

"Why, yes, I have heard of Billy Merry," returned the other, mystified.

"Well, I'm the little joker," acknowledged Horace, with a sneer.

"You!" exclaimed the preacher.

"Yes—me! And I make a hundred and fifty a week—three times as much as you make in a month. But we're both in the same box. See? Our business keeps us from marrying as we want."

Horace laughed unpleasantly. To his friend's face came an expression of compassionate understanding.

"My dear fellow," he began, "all honest work—"

But Horace cut him short.

"Oh, damn that piffle!" he cried. "Anything that isn't crime is honest. But I'm one of these hideous clowns that Kitty hates so—a man who makes a fool of himself to raise a laugh. You've heard me draw her out, and probably wondered why. Now you know—and you know how much chance I've got with her."

The minister looked genuinely distressed.

"Isn't there something else you could do?" he suggested. "Something—"

"Isn't there something else you could do?" flung back Horace at him. "I've got a mother and a crippled father dependent on me. I've got to work at a trade that'll bring the money in. But you—you stand alone. Why don't you break away and earn your girl? You think she likes me best. How do you know? How do I know? We haven't asked her. You've as good a chance as I. Better. You could make a gentleman's wife of her, and I couldn't. Get out and earn her!"

"Horace! Horace!" There was entreaty—protest—in the cry.

"I told you I'd talk to you straight,"

retorted the clown, "and I'm going to do it without any frills on. You've got the gumption to invent what looks like a pretty good thing. Why don't you go on inventing things—make a business of it—earn enough to keep a wife? Then you'd be somebody, and of some use in the world. Now you're nothing but a stick, and a mighty weak one, at that—too weak, by George, for even a girl to lean on!"

"Atkins!" There was shame now, and indignation, in the cry.

"Just answer me this," went on the clown relentlessly: "What good are you doing yourself preaching to a bunch of leather-lined country boobs, who want salvation at cut-rate prices—want to sneak into heaven on a scalped ticket? Why, these guys up here are well fixed—got coin—and they won't pay you the wages of a stake driver. Wait! Answer me this, Lomas; you've been preaching here two years. What have you done in all that time that's really worth while—that has paid you?"

The young clergyman's head was bowed, and for many seconds he remained strangely silent. Then he looked out over the placid waters of the lake, and it seemed as if the peace of them found reflection in his face. When he spoke, his voice was hushed and tremulous.

"I have brought eighteen souls to God," he said. "And I have brought the solace of His word to the sick and the sorrowing, to those dying and those bereaved, to those in trouble and those whose hearts had failed them utterly. I have done all that I could, Horace, and I have been richly paid."

There was a smile on the speaker's lips as he finished. Horace, who had been intently studying him, dropped his eyes. He felt as one who has peered unbidden on a sacred thing.

"Well," he remarked awkwardly, "I guess we can't see it the same way, so there's nothing more to be said. I'm going home in the morning, and you'll have a clear field with Kitty."

The clergyman's eyes flashed with very worldly anger.

"Your opinion of me is too low," he

charged. "You cannot toss Kitty to me as you would a bone to a famished dog. I would not take her in that way, nor would you. And you are not treating her fairly. If you love her she has a right to know it—a right to the chance to accept or refuse you. You must give her that chance."

Horace pondered this a while. Then he said:

"Say, suppose we go back."

He stood up suddenly, as if to stretch himself, forgetful that he was in a cranky cedar skiff. The next moment he was plunging down into water two fathoms deep.

Arthur Lomas went over with the boat, which floated bottom up some twenty yards from shore. All at once it flashed through his mind that Horace had said he could not swim. With a few swift strokes, he was at the spot, as nearly as he could judge, where his friend had gone down. Watching anxiously, he saw his head emerging almost within hand reach. An instant later he had him by the collar band of his shirt.

"Keep perfectly cool, Horace," the clergyman adjured him.

"Don't worry," spluttered the clown, coughing out a volume of lake water. "What next?"

"Slip your hands around on my shoulders from the back, and leave the rest to me. So! Now we'll get to the boat."

Presently Horace was clinging to the sternpost of the skiff, and Arthur, at his side, was propelling it shoreward. When they came to the shallow water they righted the craft, then beached and emptied her, and started home.

As they got out at the little wharf at the foot of the garden Horace turned to his companion.

"I owe you one, Arthur," he said simply. "I shan't forget it."

Arthur laughed the thought away, and they went up to the house.

There were only three of them at the supper table that evening. The minister had been called away to see Ezra Perkins, who had fallen from a haymow and was reported to be dying.

Ezra was the town drunkard. It was a sort of boast of the community that Ezra had not been "plumb sober" but twice in forty years, and in each instance it was no fault of his. Once he lay sick with the smallpox, and the other time he was in jail for stealing a jug of apple brandy, which, alas, was not committed with him.

"It ain't no use trying to stop Arthur," rolled out Aunt Tabby, commenting on his absence. "He's hungry to capture Ezra's soul before it gits away. I'm thinking he'll have a job to find it, though. It must be shriveled up like a dried cow pea by this time."

"Arthur's all to the good," said Horace, looking straight at Kitty. "He's a man from head to heel."

Kitty lowered her eyes to her plate, and said nothing; and at this point the doorbell rang. The girl ran to answer it, and in a moment came back with a telegram for Horace.

"Oh, I hope it isn't bad news!" she cried.

Horace exchanged a glance with Miss Brown.

"I hope so," he said, and tore open the envelope. A shout escaped him: "Lonesome Larry! Listen to this." His voice trembled with eagerness as he read out the message:

"Fifty thousand dollars offered for all rights, home and abroad. Immediate settlement."

A bellow—it can in no other way be adequately described—proceeded from Miss Tabitha Brown. It was inarticulate—a tremendous sound expressive of great joy.

"For mercy's sake!" exclaimed Kitty. "What is it all about?"

"Arthur!" roared the giantess. "Arthur's patent. Horace made those people down in New York buy it. He ain't a beggar preacher any more. And"—she paused, a wave of indignation sweeping over her—"and here he's off laboring on that dratted Ezra Perkins, with all this good news waiting for him. Bah!"

"I'm glad for him—very, very glad," murmured Kitty, who had dropped in a chair, overwhelmed with the intelli-

gence. "And it—it was a splendid thing for Horace to do."

She darted a glance at Horace, upon whom silence seemed to have fallen after his first burst of emotion. Miss Brown glowered at her stepniece.

"Glad!" she bayed. "Is that the best you can do, Katherine Randall? With the five thousand dollars I'm going to give you for a wedding present added too—"

"Aunt Tabby!" shrilled the girl, jumping to her feet, her face afame. "You're outrageous!"

She started to the door, but Horace interposed:

"Wait a minute, Kitty. I want to make a confession to you. I want to do it before Arthur comes back."

Kitty, thus entreated, resumed her seat. But the color did not die out from her face, and in her eyes a sparkling expectancy grew. Miss Brown stared at the young man in blank amazement. His tone portended trouble.

"Horace Atkins!" she boomed, a swift suspicion swooping down on her. "You ain't going to tell me that you and—and—Kitty——"

She stopped, overcome at the thought that had suggested itself. This time Miss Kitty made no outcry. She sat perfectly still, her slim white hands tightly clasped in her lap.

"I am going to tell you this," said Horace, including them both with his eyes: "In a way, I have deceived you about myself. When I came here I didn't think it necessary that you should know exactly who I was, but now——"

"What! You ain't Horace Atkins? You lied about your name?" Miss Brown shot the questions at him like discharges from heavy ordnance.

"I haven't lied, Aunt Tabby," returned Horace quietly. "I have only kept my mouth shut about some things, that's all. I told you my real name, but I didn't tell you I had another by which most people know me. And when I told you I traveled for a concern that makes rings, it was the truth, only I didn't tell you they were sawdust rings."

Kitty was looking at him with an odd little smile.

"I don't think Aunt Tabby quite understands," she said. "He means," she coolly explained to the big woman, "that he is Billy Merry, the circus clown. I have known it for a long time—ages—ever since the first night I met him."

Silence followed this announcement. Horace was so completely taken aback that he could find nothing to say; and through Miss Brown's mind were passing certain reflections upon the events of the past three weeks that just then precluded speech.

"You see," pursued Miss Randall calmly, addressing her remarks to the clown, "I'm a reader of the daily papers. When you were taken down sick in Boston your picture was published, and the sad, sad story of your mis-spent life. I kept the article—I don't know why—just a foolish fancy—and I had it in my traveling bag on the steamer. Before I went to bed that night I had placed you, but when I found you were so particular about keeping your identity a secret I respected your wish, and relieved my feelings by giving you digs in your professional ribs whenever the opportunity offered. And I hope," she ended vindictively, "that you felt 'em."

"I did," answered Horace, obtuse as ever; "and you meant every word you said."

"I did not!" declared Kitty, instantly abandoning the aggressive.

"I will prove it to you," insisted Horace savagely. "Aunt Tabby, you have heard her say what she thinks of the man who will paint himself up to look and act like a fool?"

Miss Brown nodded, but would not further commit herself. She was in process of mental readjustments that were illuminating if disturbing. Horace got up.

"Wait here for me ten minutes," he commanded Kitty; and, taking consent for granted, walked out, and mounted to his room. He saw by the clock on his bureau that it lacked a quarter of eight. At eight-forty there was a train

for Portland and the south. He would catch it. He hoped Arthur would not return before then.

Horace opened his trunk, and took from it the clown's dress. What was the mysterious influence, reaching down from the future, that had prompted him to bring it? Nothing which boded happiness to him—of that he was certain. He slipped on the costume over his clothes, and proceeded to "make up" as hideously as experience could suggest. It sickened him as he watched his face change in the glass—saw it grow white as plaster, striped red and blue, with mouth distorted into shapeless lines. When he had finished he drew on a red wig, and, snatching up a dirty white conical cap, ran down to the lower floor.

"Here we are again!" he guffawed, as he swaggered into the dining room. "How's all the folks?"

He tossed the cap into the air, and caught it rakishly on his head as it fell. And then he stopped short. Arthur Lomas was standing at the farther side of the table. He was holding the telegram in his hand, but there was no joy of sudden fortune in his face. He was looking at Kitty, who had sprung to her feet and was steadfastly regarding the unlovely figure of the clown. Aunt Tabby had disappeared.

Miss Kitty spoke up, and there was calculated malice in her tones, malice which—alack for her mischievous intent!—somehow suggested tears.

"You are not irresistibly attractive in your working clothes, Mr. Atkins," she observed, "but neither is a deep-sea diver. Was it only this you wanted to prove to me?"

"No," retorted Horace roughly. "I wanted to confirm you in your opinion of me. I wanted to give you a private view of a professional fool who is not ashamed of his calling, yet who knows it debars him from aspirations that other men may cherish. And now I'm going to say good-by to you. I'm going to take the eight-forty south to-night. I must get back to the circus, where I belong."

He turned abruptly, and went out.

"Horace!" called the clergyman after him, and strode to the door. But Horace had gone on up the stair.

The clergyman glanced at Kitty. The color had fled from her cheek, and her hand was fluttering up to her throat. A gasping sound escaped her, as though she were choking. She had felt so sure Horace would understand her tender raillery that now to find she was mistaken left her dumb and without recourse. She sank into a chair by the table with a little hopeless gesture that smote Arthur Lomas to the heart. He longed to go to her and comfort her, but resolutely held to his place by the door.

"Kitty, my dear!" he cried. "Horace shall not go away—not to-night. He loves you—he told me so this very day. He——"

Kitty's head went down on the table suddenly, and the whiteness of her neck was stained with crimson. The young minister drew in his breath sharply. Then he finished, speaking very low:

"He is a man, my dear, to be well loved—for he is true and brave and kind."

A little sob was Kitty's only reply to this, and the Reverend Arthur Lomas turned about and followed Horace up to his room. The clown had washed off his make-up, and was busy at his trunk. The clergyman went over to him, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Horace, my friend," he said, "you have made me rich, but I am not going to attempt to thank you now. There is a matter of greater moment to be considered by us."

"You mean—Kitty?"

"Yes."

"Well," said the clown, "you saw how it was."

"Yes—but you did not," answered the clergyman. "Oh, man," he burst out passionately, "are you blind? She loves you with all her pure young heart. Even now she is waiting for you to come to her."

The clown eyed him searchingly.

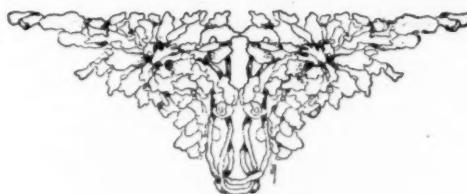
"You have had your chance with her—to-night?" he demanded.

For a second's flight the clergyman hesitated. Then he said evenly:

"Yes, Horace, I have had my chance.
It is you. She—she confessed it."

The clown gripped the clergyman's hand with both his own, and, without a word, left the room, and went swiftly down the stairs.

The clergyman blew out the light, and crossed to the open window. He stood there a while, his eyes uplifted to the soft summer stars. When he turned away the look of pain on his face was gone. A great peace had descended on him, and he walked in its close embrace.



CONTENTMENT

MIDST foreign lands, on errant feet,
 'Tis mine at will to roam—
But his, the old familiar street
 And shining lights of home.

I've met full many a potentate
 In kingdoms far and wild—
But his, to see at door or gate
 His smiling wife and child!

Strange peoples have I moved among,
 Who in strange language spoke—
But his, to know the face and tongue
 Of kindly neighbor folk!

Adventures mine, 'neath every sun,
 And all the pride thereof—
But his, each day's work nobly done,
 And eves of peace and love!

The wanderer feeds on sweet unrest,
 His sails are never furled—
But, oh, to be that one, thrice blest,
 Who makes of home his world!

EDWIN L. SABIN.



THE devil had come on several short visits to Terassa, but never openly or in his own likeness, and no one would have supposed that he would venture into so good a town showing his own face or even a faithful picture of it. But news is sometimes surprising.

Once he had come in a very pleasant-looking gentleman from America, who gave five cents apiece to all the padre's thirty little boys for luck money, while in the same hour with this benevolence he was secretly inspiring the proprietor of the fonda to learn, and sell, American drinks. This was the more astonishing, because Satan had done the same thing to the former proprietor, years before, with the result that a man had met his death at the hands of Miguel, whose devout parents had named him after the statue in the poppy fields, and who was altogether too fine a youth to have recorded Terassa's only murder.

Through reminiscences of this, the padre successfully awed and reformed the new proprietor, but not in time to avoid a fresh calamity, and that to a lady marked for her years and her timidity. This was Amarillis, a widow so abnormally meek that she almost never spoke. She said so little even at confession that the padre would have been disturbed save for his great faith in her honesty. She did not speak when her husband died—it was found out later without her having mentioned it; and she had scarcely spoken while he was alive, although he was kind and en-

couraging. Old Rosa, who had a great many mean thoughts about people, said she did not believe they had ever been married, for Amarillis could never have brought herself to make the responses; and all Amarillis replied to this wicked suggestion was, "I did, Rose," even avoiding the "a" at the end of Rosa's pretty name. She was so exceedingly small that she had to be very cautious in drinking her wine; but diminutive stature is quite usually a sign of latent inquisitiveness, and, having seen the American gentleman enjoying his strange drink at the fonda, and having saved a little money, she bought one, and she talked all the way home, and to nearly all the people she met, whether she was acquainted with them or not, saying things, moreover, that no one would have supposed she knew. She afterward denied it to the padre, not with many words, it is true, but weeping very sorrowfully at her lost reputation, and shaking her head repeatedly, with a most convincing expression, so that the padre concluded she must have taken something extremely dangerous, and was thus led to investigate the fonda, and to stop the devil's work in it for the second time.

Again, the devil must have come to the first Wine Festival, and in several forms, for love spells were sold by an old magician who set up in town, and the padre had to buy him off with money earned by the little boys in the poppy fields; and before that manifestation, the padre discovered ancient Inés, Terassa's best lace maker, finishing a

fine piece of thread work with a big outline of the devil in it. When he destroyed it, he paid for the thread; but she was never repaid for the time and pains she had spent, and although her husband happened to die next day, which softened the padre's heart toward her, and should have softened hers toward him, she became an atheist, in the hope of hurting his feelings.

It did, but he was wise enough not to show it; and Inés, not having been struck dead as she had greatly feared she would be, enjoyed atheism very much, save that the padre did not seem so impressed as she had expected.

The devil having successfully proved his cunning upon Amarillis and Inés, the padre began to fear for his orphans, and with reason, for Tito, his youngest and tenderest, ran away with a marionette from the magician's booth; and no sooner was the festival over than José, who had been so bad that the padre had threatened to return him to the almshouse in Barcelona, but who had always been brave and truthful about his crimes, was found out to be also a liar. He told Tito that a cow, lowing for assistance when it needed to be milked, did not make the noise with its mouth, but with its horn. And Tito believed it, and corrected the padre in the natural-history lesson. For all these reasons, it was with some brightness of heart that he turned his thoughts to a smaller and religious festival, that should have its gayety apart from wines.

Down in the padre's poppy fields, from where Terassa's hill looks like a girl's green skirt with a small Spanish flag sewed at the hem, there is a statue of Santo Miguel. It is not the one that used to stand there, but it is quite splendid, made out of stone as bold and pretty as marble, and as lifelike as anything in the cemetery at Barcelona. The padre never looked toward it as he had done toward the old wooden one; but his eyes gave admiration to replace affection, and the other rises safe in a votive niche in his church in the chasm road, secure from rain and wayfaring kisses.

There were many stories about the old statue, for Santo Miguel was Terassa's patron saint. Some people said that it had been there before any one was born in Terassa; and others that it was found there on the eighth of May after the first few citizens were born, to mark the apparition of St. Michael, and still others, even more devout, said that it was not an apparition, but a transfiguration. If this was true, St. Michael was, indeed, transformed, for he had only half a wing, and the upper part of his spear had vanished, carrying the thumb with it; but when this condition was ridiculed by strangers, the padre referred them to a well-known house of curios in Paris, where, he maintained, there was a highly prized figure no whit better off.

The master of the poppy fields, Tonino, loved it, too, and knew it to be so close to the padre's heart that, from the goodness of his own, and, perhaps, from a state of conscience at his participation in the love spells, he suggested that the remainder of the little boys' money be used for a new statue. There was little enough; but Violeta made a reply to this by going about among the prosperous Terassans and acquiring more. So loved was the padre that the poor contributed, too, and Amarillis gave a coin. Rosa said it could not be called giving, for she said nothing about it, but Violeta found her standing, at hottest noon, against the highway wall, with the coin on her outstretched palm. When it was taken from her, she nodded her head, and wept, and went home.

This coin completed a very fair sum, and the padre decided to go forth for a statue, and to give Rosa a holiday by taking her with him.

At first she was ungrateful, accusing him of extravagance and some nefarious purpose; but such was his knowledge of her character that her climbing into his cart at the last inconvenient moment did not put him about, and he smiled with pleasure at her company and its possibilities of good advice in selecting the statue, for though her tongue was fuller of venom than any

other organ in Terassa, there was imbedded in it a power of hitting the truth that would turn a gypsy's face as pitifully white as an American's.

To the padre's sorrow, and almost persuading him that the devil was deliberate in his choice of widows, she was quite herself in Barcelona, where her temper was not understood, and where she was arrested for being saucy—indeed, very cruel—to a soldier, with whom she quarreled without the slightest provocation. In addition, she was afterward defiant, and did nothing to pacify the government, so that she had to stay in prison a whole afternoon. Luckily, the padre was a gentleman of so pleasant and gentle a demeanor that her retainers were mollified toward evening, and he returned to Terassa with Rosa and the statue both intact.

No one was allowed to see it, save Tonino, who helped the padre to raise it by night in the poppy fields, and droop a canvas over it. Next morning the little boys were all very much excited at having to work in close proximity to it, and not look under the covering, and the padre heard José say to Tito: "You would not dare come down in the moonlight and look underneath."

"I confess it," Tito replied, "but neither would you."

"I would," said José, "if the devil were under it."

"I do not think," said Tito affectionately, "that I would be so very afraid of the devil if you were with me, José."

Having rebuked them sharply for this conversation, the padre turned to preparations for the ceremonies. The Parrot Woman engaged to perform, having her little birds flutter up from her as the canvas was lifted, and cluster down upon the statue; and the little boys should make the first crop of spring poppies say, in big, red letters outlined with yellow, "SANTO MIGUEL;" and at the close Juanita, whose pretty voice was not happy in church music, would sing and dance the cadenza from "Gran Via."

All was arranged, but there was one more trouble in store, for the elderly ladies of the town gathered on the vil-

lage green to discuss who should walk two and two in the procession. Rosa said that, although she was the most important woman in Terassa, having bought the statue, she would not walk at all if the atheist, Inés, were allowed to look at it, even from a distance; and when Inés declared that she had changed her mind again, and was now a Catholic, Rosa urged the rest to stone her from the green. Amarillis, who loved them both, strove earnestly to speak, to pacify them, but the only genteel thing she could think of was a remark that had greatly impressed her when made by an elegant foreign lady who crooked out her little finger in drinking tea, and Amarillis repeated it now:

"I hope we will have rain." She was much chagrined and hurt when both Rosa and Inés turned upon her and accused her of malice; and it was finally the Parrot Woman who settled the difficulty.

"Amarillis meant to be polite," she said, "and as for stoning any one, the padre would not allow it. If Inés says she has reformed, she should be allowed to come. You know the padre asked me to walk alone in front of the couples, with all my little birds flying; but if you continue unkind, I shall have Inés walk with me, which would spoil the effect. Although," she added kindly, "I consider her handsome."

"She looks like Punch and Judy!" cried Rosa; but as the Parrot Woman was the only person in town whom nobody disliked, she had her way, and it was arranged that Inés should walk with Amarillis, who did not hate her.

The chosen day proved fine, with a very blue sky, and spring flowers open in profusion, and Terassa had not seen a fairer sight than the procession as it moved singing down the glittering highway. The padre came first, followed by the thirty little boys in choir costume, and the Parrot Woman next, with all her green birds flying ahead of the pairs of old ladies, who in turn preceded the main populace. Inés was in line, and every one thought her reform must be sincere, for she sang louder

than any one else, and when the procession had wound around the statue, and come to a halt among the flower beds, she stood out of place in her eagerness to see.

The padre raised his hands, the Ave Maria broke forth, Toninio grasped the pulley rope, the birds rose from the Parrot Woman, the covering lifted.

But the little boys stopped singing, the canvas fell in a lump among the poppies, the padre's hands remained up-raised, a great heart-throbbing went through the people. It was in truth an apparition that they had seen. It was the statue of St. Michael; but the beautiful white face was painted red, like the devil's face; there were two cow horns on its head; and a long tail of hempen rope, with a thorn on the end, hung mortifyingly down to the ground.

There was an utter hush, until suddenly all the thirty little boys began to cry, and to stampede over the poppy beds, and then confusion and noise ran riot. Inés, screaming with horror, was carried into Rosa's house, where she had tried to get for twenty years. Toninio could not seem to collect the little boys, or himself, either; and it was not until lungs were exhausted that the people remembered the padre, and fell silent out of respect for him. When his voice came, it was so quiet and so sorrowful that it awed them more than the sacrilege had done.

"Go home," was all he said.

In the church, José denied it with a vehemence that verged upon anger.

"Think well," said the padre, "for you have been known to lie once, my dear, and if you do so now, and are found out, you shall surely go back to the almshouse, though my two thumbs would be wet every time that I thought of you there. Think well!"

But he was defiant and sullen, and presently the padre, with a long sigh, called the whole thirty together, that he might question them in each other's presence. José usually sat beside Tito, but to-day he crept to the rear, and Tito came next to Bernardo.

"Guillermo!" called the padre.

"No, padre!" and so on to Bernardo:

"No, padre!"

"Tito!"

But José sprang up, white and trembling.

"I did it, padre, I did it!" he cried, and rushed through the doorway with tears enough to dampen all the thumbs in Spain.

At noon next day the padre sank down on Rosa's doorstep.

"My heart is broken," he said. "All night I did not sleep. I prayed and prayed, and I do not seem to have been answered. Shall he go to the almshouse? Must I keep my word? Rosa, when you are not cross you are my best and wisest friend. Can it be that God will answer me through you?"

"He will to this extent," said Rosa. "I have prayed less and thought more, and you may set your mind at rest about the almshouse, for José did not do it."

"What?" cried the padre, staring at her. "Do you know this? How do you know it?"

"How many bones are there in the human body?" asked Rosa.

"You should know better than I," said the padre testily, "for you are always picking people to pieces, but I am told there are one hundred and fifty."

"Then," said Rosa, "I know one hundred and fifty times that José did not do it."

"Is it wisdom," demanded the padre, "to say and say a thing because you wish it?"

"What can that be?" asked Rosa, peering into the road.

A small cloud of dust was flying toward them down the highway, and in a moment Tito, in a whirl of golden dirt, arrived before the padre, jumping madly up and down.

"What ails you?" cried the padre. "Are you on strings? Do you think you are the marionette that you stole? Stop jumping! Speak!"

But Tito flung himself upon the padre, closing up his legs on him like the blades of a jackknife.

"José did not do it!" he screamed. "I did it! I did it!"

"Stop howling!" cried the padre. "Stop this fright, and tell me. Why did José confess?"

"To save me from the almshouse!" wailed Tito; and the bladelike legs sprang open again, and in a fresh storm of tears he vanished up the highway whence he had come.

The padre did not follow him, but instead leaned heavily against old Rosa. "Did I have two hearts?" he asked weakly; and suddenly his head sank upon his hands, and great drops crept forth between the fingers.

"Come, come!" exclaimed Rosa, half angry and half frightened. "Are you yourself a child? Come! Am I a wet nurse, that I must pet you, and ruin my apron doing it? You need rest. Go home at once, and drink some hot milk and wine, and lie down for two hours. I will come to you then, and we will straighten out the matter. I promise it, and I promise I will not be cross! Come, God wants you to!"

"I am in your hands," he answered, and started up the highway, going as slowly as a blind man.

But not as slowly as Rosa went about her house, dressing herself in several colors, and applying finery that she had not worn in years. She put on her mother's wedding skirt, which was still quite yellow; and above it a great shawl of Valencia lace, which had become so. For her mantilla she chose a snowy-white one from Madrid, and back of it, sheltering her ear, fixed a rose of crimson paper. When she was nearly satisfied, she added three feathers, after the cheerful manner of the recent Princess of Wales, thrusting them into her hair through her mantilla. Then, after a last glance at her mirror, she stepped out into the sunlight, and, drawing her creamy laces close about her, went up the highway like a baby's funeral.

When she came to the door of Inés' house, she did not knock at it, for she knew she would never pass it if she did; she pushed it open boldly and entered, closing it behind her.

Inés began to bow very low, but in doing so she recognized Rosa, and straightened up in her astonishment.

"My friend," said Rosa, "you are surprised, but I have come to you with such news as you never have heard!"

"I do not believe you!" gasped Inés. "You would not be here if you did not have some spite up your back! Get up off my chair!"

"Sit yourself down on the other one," said Rosa, "and it will bring our eyes on as good a level. As for what I have up my back, it would humble you lower than the chair if I were cruel enough to tell it suddenly."

"If you must tell me your news," cried Inés, "tell it and quit my house!"

"Now that you have obeyed me and sat down," said Rosa, "I will. But I must do it gradually, lest you fall over onto the floor and injure yourself. Should you not fortify yourself with a little wine?"

"You shall have none of my wine!" cried Inés.

"What manners you have," said Rosa, "when I have come to you in sheerest charity! If I had not the kindest heart in Terassa, would I have been polite enough to wear all these lovely, expensive clothes, that have been in my family for two hundred years?"

"Take the wine, then," cried Inés, "and hurry, or I will put you out, and with very few of your clothes!"

"My poor friend," replied Rosa, sipping slowly, "your fate is pitiable, so I will not keep you in this terrible suspense, but tell you the worst in as few words as I can think of. Well, it is this: The padre knows you did it."

"You lie!" screamed Inés. "Did what?"

"He knows you defiled the statue, and he knows it on the best authority."

"You lie! You lie!" screamed Inés again. "No one would have told him such a thing but you! Go home! I will have no gutter people in my house, and you are painted like an English-woman! As you run, beware the little boys, for you look like a piece of candy!"

"I own it," said Rosa. "I did not dare come otherwise, lest you paint me yourself, as you did the statue."

"You fiend, how dare you accuse me?" shrieked Inés. "Me, the most popular woman in town, and one who has had several loving husbands, whereas you, in your maddest moments, boast of only one, and one that nobody remembers! This from you, an abandoned woman who has been in jail!"

"Take care, you wretch!" cried Rosa violently. "You have made a mistake in mentioning that! You would have known me guiltless if you had seen me sitting among the rest, for I was the only woman of elegant appearance there, while all the others were low and tawdry, like yourself! Let me tell you that in my cell I was coupled with a corrupt unfortunate who swallowed the tails of her sardines, and resembled you in every other particular save her tongue, which was civil, and her teeth, which were present. This is how I found out that!"

"Murderess," screamed Inés, "you will find mine present if you slap me again! You were guilty, and everybody knows it! Stop it! Guilty of assault, and that upon a poor young soldier less than half your years! Let go of me and get out of my house, or I will take my broom and sweep you out, all but your thumb!" And she sprang across to the corner.

"Drop that broom!" cried Rosa. "Do you think I swept the soldier? I did no more to him than I have done to you, or I would be in jail yet! Do you wish to go there yourself? Drop it! Do you see I have your wine jug in my hand?"

"Set down my jug!"

"Set down the broom," shouted Rosa, "and do the same thing to your spine on that stool, or I will lash you with your own tail from the statue! Though I suspected you from the start, it was not I who told the padre, but I know who did, for I overheard the conversation!"

"Who told him?" gasped Inés, sinking onto the stool.

"Look what you did to my shawl!" said Rosa, settling back in her chair

and displaying her lace. "I came here out of charity to tell you, and look at what you did!"

"Who told him?" demanded Inés again, trembling all over.

"The devil," said Rosa calmly. "He came up last night through the chasm road, and called on the padre at his house, and told him how he had inspired you to do it."

"You lie! You are doing this to frighten me! The devil could never come up the chasm road!"

"I saw it with my own eyes," said Rosa. "I was going up to the padre's in the moonlight, about ten o'clock, but I never got there, for I saw this dreadful sight. He had a great brazier on his head, upside down like your tasteless bonnet. And he was making a terrifying noise, for in one hand he carried a huge tin pan, and in the other a great, red-hot iron stick, with which he beat horrible music out of it. It was a fearful sight, I assure you, and if I had not been a virtuous woman, or had had such a conscience as yours must be, I would have fallen right down on my face in a fit. As it was, my knees cracked together so that I could scarcely totter up to the padre's house and listen to the conversation through the window. You will soon have a chance to tell him whether he can climb the chasm road or not, for he is coming to get you at precisely six o'clock. He arranged it last night with the padre. That is what I came to tell you, but I shall tell you nothing more until you confess."

"I confess!" cried Inés, weeping and wringing her hands. "I confess! I confess!"

"So, you awful woman!" exclaimed Rosa. "Of course, your confession is only a formality, because the four of us knew it—the padre and I, and the devil and you; but I am glad you have made it, for it proves that the devil himself is more truthful than you are. To think that a woman of your years would tell such wicked lies, and, after committing a vile crime, allow suspicion to rest upon two innocent little boys!"

"I have confessed! I have confessed!" wept Inés. "Tell me more!"

"Well, here is a point," said Rosa. "The reason the devil consulted the padre, to begin with, was on account of your atheism. He said he had been very pleased about it, and spoke of America, which is very guilty on that score. He told the padre that he knew of one gentleman that had been the most popular there—so beloved that he was sent all around the world, and met every single person in it except the pope, and yet he was not a Catholic. 'But,' said the devil, 'even he was not quite an atheist.' So, by the simplest arithmetic, Inés, you can see that you are worse than any human being in America."

"I never meant it!" wept Inés.

"He was anxious to know whether the padre intended to overlook it, and when he replied that he had not decided, and was debating whether to excommunicate you, the devil asked if, in event of his favoring you there, he would also absolve you from having defiled the statue, and the padre, very pale and with a gesture of horror, cried out that if you had done that he was through with you, and that so far as he was concerned the devil might have you any time he liked. But I will tell you no more, for the rest is so fearful I am sure you could not sustain it."

"I beg you! I beg you!" wailed Inés.

"Very well, then. The reason the devil said six o'clock, was so that you will be in time to cook his supper. That is to be one of your punishments, and I am sure you will not delay about it, for not only would he prod you with his burning stick, but the kitchen, of course, is the most overheated part of the place, and fancy how you will hop on the red-hot floor, and in your bare feet, too! Another punishment is to be for your sin of vainglory, in pretending you came from gentle folk. You are not to be allowed to so much as speak to any one of gentle birth there, so you will have no company. The rest I could scarce hear, from fright, or see, with my eyes nearly blind from the little blue flames that flickered up and down on his tail, which is not at all like the limp copy you hung on the statue; but I bated my breath for your sake.

Will you hear to the end, or would you rather find out when you get there?"

"I beseech you! I beseech you!" Inés moaned, rocking to and fro on her chair.

"Well, when it was arranged, the devil, with a very satisfied expression at having got you for himself, and as impressively as I speak it now, leaned over to the padre and whispered to him: 'Now that we are agreed about her, I will tell you in confidence that there is but one way she can escape me, and that would never occur to her. There is one town in the world that I never go into. It is wicked enough, I assure you, but so expensive that even I cannot afford it. Besides, it is so far away that she could scarcely get there before six o'clock.' Then he mentioned the name; but for years, Inés, you have accused me behind my back of being spiteful, and I fear I am enough so not to tell you."

"Rosa! Rosa!" moaned Inés. "Is it not enough that I must leave my little house that I have lived in with three husbands?"

"Well, well, I will be charitable," said Rosa, "for I boasted I would be; but not until you have confessed other crimes. Mind you are truthful, or you will never hear the name. First, when I so kindly ordered jelly from you for the Wine Festival, I found a needle in it. Did you, or did you not, deliberately put it in?"

"I did, Rosa, I did!"

"So! And you did it in the wicked hope that it would kill me!"

"No, Rosa! I swear it! It stands to reason that I would have feared to have murder on my soul, but I hoped that it would nearly kill you."

"And you see," exclaimed Rosa, "that I have lived to save your soul! Oh, you fearful woman, how horrible must your feelings be about it now!"

"I have confessed, Rosa, I have confessed!"

"There is one more thing. While I was in Barcelona, buying the statue, a tragedy occurred, when a fashionable young lady threw a burning fluid in her lover's face, because he had deserted

her. Now, confess that you have some of that fearful acid in your closet, waiting an opportunity to throw it at me, because you have always been jealous of my good looks. I know you have it, for the devil was mentioning it only last night to the padre."

"He lied!" cried Inés, springing up. "You shall look in my closet yourself!"

"No," said Rosa. "I will never look in your closet, for you would afterward gossip down there, and say I did it to snoop into your laces, as you tried to do in my house yesterday. The suspicion will have to stand between your word and the devil's, and I know which to take."

"You shall look! You shall!" cried Inés wildly, and she threw the door open herself.

"Now remember," warned Rosa, "you insisted I should," and she carefully examined the contents. "Well, I admit you have none. I see the devil can tell lies as wickedly as you can. I would not have believed it of him! And I will say your lace is quite pretty—if it were only a little bit prettier, you might be able to sell it to some one."

"But the town, Rosa, the town!"

"I will tell you in a moment," said Rosa, "though I fear it will gain you little, for the place is so very far, I doubt, as the devil did, if you get there by six. But I will help you all I can. Listen carefully. With only your mule, and your cart, and with all of your goods piled in that, you can never cover the distance, for you must go at a most frantic pace. You shall see whether I came in friendship, for with veriest forethought and kindness I have brought a little money with me, and though your lace is not as good as you have boasted, there is quite a lot of it, and without examining it further, for the whole of it, I will give you the sum I have brought. It is not much, for though I am richer than you are, I did not feel I should spend more on such a wicked woman, and it will be enough for you to buy that goat of Juanita's that she is so anxious to be rid of. It is ailing a little, but with the mule to pull it along, it will be better than

nothing, and something with horns is appropriate. You can at least get well on your way, and at great risk to myself I will do one other thing for you. Just before six I will return here for the lace, and when the devil comes and discovers your flight, I will engage him in conversation as long as I can. I would never dare mislead him, but I can be very entertaining when I like, and it may get you a little extra time. If I am found out, I chance horrible punishment, but I think he will be more inclined to smile at my cleverness. Now hasten with your preparations, for the town, my poor, lost friend, is Algeciras, next door to Gibraltar, and you will have to go a thousand miles an hour! Now will you tell me whether I am kind?"

But Inés did not tell, for she had fainted, and Rosa sped across the square to the smallest house in Terassa, and seized Amarillis by the shoulders.

"Here is something that will make you talk for once! It was Inés that defiled the statue, and she has confessed it! Run to the padre, and tell him! I promised to come myself, but I am busy, for I must tell every one else! Keep your wits together, and remember to say 'Inés did it, and has confessed!' Run! Run!"

Amarillis ran. Running was a simple matter for her, compared with speech; but as she went she became more and more terrified lest the padre would not believe what she said, if she could say it, and at her frantic appearance on his threshold he sat forward in his chair.

"What is the matter, Amarillis? Why do you make faces? Are you very ill?"

Amarillis did not answer, but reached out her hand.

"Amarillis, you alarm me! Speak out! Why do you crook your finger at me in that ridiculous manner?"

"I—hope we will have rain!" said Amarillis.

"You have been drinking again!" thundered the padre. "I shall go to the fonda and expel the proprietor! How many did he sell you?"

"N-nine!" said Amarillis, which was the day of the month.

The padre sprang from his chair. "Undress yourself at once and get into my bed! I will fetch Rosa!" and he rushed from the house.

As he neared the highway, more than twenty of the little boys ran toward him into the chasm road. There was a great din up in the village, rising and falling and rising again, blown hither and thither by the springtime wind.

"Has the world gone mad?" he cried. "Yes, sir! Yes, sir! She did it! She confessed it! She did it," cried the little boys around him as he ran. "Who? What? Amarillis?" shouted the padre. In a corner of the highway wall were Tito and José, clinging to each other and weeping, and he stopped short as he came up to them.

"We did not do it! We did not do it!" they screamed, weeping and jumping. "We need not go to the almshouse! She did it! She confessed it!"

"Stop shrieking! Explain yourselves!" ordered the padre loudly. But Rosa came running toward him, her three plumes waving like a charger's in the breeze.

"Did Amarillis tell you?"

"She told me she bought seven. She is ill in my bed—go to her!"

"Nonsense!" cried Rosa. "She has had no drinks, but such news would intoxicate any one! I bade her tell you Inés has confessed! It was she that defiled the statue, and she is leaving Terassa forever! I have been rousing the people against her, and the indignation is frightful! She may yet be stoned. She thinks that the devil is coming for her to-night, so she is going to live in Algeciras, and we will never see her again!"

He could not answer, for the clamor doubled. Forth from the square rushed Inés' cart, and her progress downward was a pitiable sight. She was standing upright in the laden cart, lashing madly at her galloping mule and the mob that ran beside her. The exhausted goat was already overthrown, and was dragged through the dust by the harness. She was bent for the

chasm road, and when she saw the padre standing at the entrance, she began screaming at him in her terror:

"You shall not stop me! I defy you! He shall not get me!" But he stood unafraid, with arm upraised, and her cart in swerving struck the highway wall with a grinding and a clatter. A wheel came off, her bedstead was thrown to the ground, and the mule, tearing from the traces, hurled the wretched goat over the highway wall, whence it vanished down into the chasm. Toninio had sprung to save it, but it was dead, anyway.

Inés, screaming amid her ruin, had a new inspiration, and hurled herself before the padre in the road.

"Save me!" she shrieked. "I did it! I confess it! But forgive me, and plead with the devil for me! Tell him I will never sin again! I was going to lead a better life in Algeciras! I will persuade you, before six o'clock!"

"Woman," thundered the padre, "stand up and go back to your house! I will come to you to-night, and I will know whether your heart is truly changed! Who told you this wicked nonsense about the devil?"

But Inés had swooned again, and he turned commandingly to Rosa. "Explain this! It is no time for rejoicing—why are you dressed in those ridiculous clothes?"

"What?" cried Rosa bitterly. "Do I find you ungrateful? Have I not kept my promise? Have I not cleared your beloved little boys, who lied nobly for each other's sake? And, in doing it, have I not reduced that atheist to a jelly of repentance? When you should thank me in your gentlest tones, you turn upon me and call my lovely clothes ridiculous! I deserve your innocent children more than you do!" Bursting into tears, she fell upon them and kissed them. They were so astonished that they began to weep loudly again, struggling from her embraces to the padre's neck; and as the awe-struck mob melted toward Terassa, bearing the unconscious Inés across the back of her mule, the four sat weeping on the highway wall.



MY dear Helen, I am older than you, I am not so closely touched by this catastrophe, and for that reason I am able to see things more clearly than you can." Sisterly affection and wise womanhood were equally blended in Mary Walter's tones.

She was at least a dozen years older than the beautiful, young, fair-haired woman who paced back and forth the length of the music room, trailing yards of blue, faintly perfumed, draperies after her, like the falling of flocks of cornflowers in the wake of a mower.

"Mary, would you have me let the world think I could condone and accept Jim Kerrall's treatment of me?"

Helen Kerrall's eyes flashed blue fire; her short upper lip stiffened and whitened; she flamed unutterable indignation at her sister—who saw only the pain behind it.

"Dear, the world's opinion of your pride will not fill the need in your life. Jim has been wild. No one can dispute that—"

"Even he does not!" Helen interjected, with a bitter laugh. "Why, Mary—he—he didn't even *lie* to me about it!"

"He didn't? I could almost say 'how unmanly'! Isn't there, perhaps, something fine about that honesty of his? He put his home, his happiness, in jeopardy rather than hold them by falsehood. And even if you feel you have cause to doubt his love for you,

you cannot say that Jim Kerrall doesn't love his little son. He *adores* Ralph."

"Fine? He is heartless, utterly heartless. Of course it was useless for him to deny it. I had told him that I knew. It is not only her own two divorces that Eva Peckham has been responsible for! No woman's husband is safe with her. Carolyn Whitehead told me—but I had seen enough for myself. I suppose Jim knew I would not believe his denials if he made them. But he might have had the decency to pretend—if only to save my pride a little; instead of letting me see he didn't care enough for me to deny!"

Helen stopped in front of her sister; her lips were quivering, her long, slender fingers interlaced so tightly that the knuckles were white.

"Do you know *when* he confessed—or at least tacitly admitted it?"

"When, dear?"

"When I had just told him that I would not remain with him another moment—that I would consider myself defamed, and dishonored, and dragged down by the touch of such a man."

"Yes," Mary mused, aloud. "I suppose you said something very like that."

"Then I said: 'I will not be unjust. I will hear what you have to say.' And he—he just stood and looked at me, and said not one word. What could I do but walk out of his house? Though I want you to understand, Mary, that I was willing to put myself aside and to

bear the wounds to my pride before the world for little Ralph's sake."

"How do you mean, dear?"

"I told him finally that, rather than proclaim what sort of a man my little son's father was, I would remain in his home—as the mother of his son."

"He wouldn't accept that compromise, of course?"

"Jim is ruthless, Mary; absolutely ruthless. I was standing there in our room, with the keys of my trunks in my hand—I had been packing all night—when I made that offer for his boy's sake. Darling baby was asleep there in his crib. Oh, if he had really adored his son as you seem to think! I said: 'I will stay for my boy's father's sake, and as his mother only.' Jim started back from me and looked at me as if—he has frightened me with that look sometimes, Mary! He said: 'That's rather involved; but I think I get you!' And he rang the bell, and when Sutton came he said: 'Call an express for Mrs. Kerrall's trunks!' And he put on his hat and went out! And I—I came here."

"Of course, dearest," soothingly.

"And now you want to turn me out!"

"Helen, little sister, how can you say that to me?"

"Oh, I know, I've been a caged storm in your home for a month. I've worn out your rugs pacing up and down, and stamping my feet on them. I'm nervous, and irritable, and explosive, and very upsetting to cozy, serene folk like you and Will, who know how to smooth life over and make the best of things. But you didn't know all that took place between me and Jim. So now I've told you. And—and—"

Helen Kerrall's tall, slender figure bent in a quiver of sobs like a young willow tree in a sudden storm. She slid down at her sister's feet, and buried her face in her lap, and cried passionately there.

"What are we to do, baby and I, through all our long, long lifetimes—without Jim? Baby'll grow up—gradually, of course; there'll be play with other boys—and school—and—all the vigorous things that boys do; and he'll

need his father. I won't do instead. I'm only a woman. He'll need him more and more every year. And by and by he'll want to know what his father did to injure his mother so that she had to leave him, and divorce him. And he'll have a sorrow all ready made for him to bear. Jim doesn't love Ralph; he doesn't, or he would have accepted my offer to stay—gratefully, gladly—for little Ralph's sake. So that our baby could have his whole family complete, and grow up as we did, Mary, with mamma and daddy, both, to take care of us. He need never have known then that Jim and I were not happy together; or that I only lived with Jim for his sake. It would have looked all right. And you see, now, I can't go back to Jim just for baby's sake, as you have been advising, because he refuses to accept that arrangement."

Mrs. Walter stroked the blond, sobs-tossed head on her knee in silence for a few moments. Then she said:

"That was not exactly what I meant, little sister."

Helen Kerrall looked up excitedly at her sister with eyes amazed and angry, as well as tear-filled.

"Mary! You don't mean that you think I should go back and be Jim's wife again!"

"How much do *you* love little Ralph? Is not that the question for you to solve? Not how much or how little Jim cares for him?"

"You know I love my baby better than my life. He's everything to me; now more than ever, since Jim—"

Mary interrupted her gently.

"Jim would welcome any arrangement for baby's sake if it gave you back to him. Your first offer was not an easy one for a man to accept, my dear. Perhaps it was quite an impossible one."

"It would amount to forgiving Jim. *He* would see it in that light. And I don't forgive him. I never can!"

"Why not try to think about that side of it, too, a little?—forgiveness. I'm sure Jim's offense could not have been so very flagrant, as such things go, or I, too, should have heard of it. A

flirtation with Eva Peckham, that overstepped, that's all. Jim is wild. He grew up wild, without any code but experience, or any instructor but his daily life and its adventures. Can't you take all these things into consideration a little more in judging him? Besides, dear—men don't see these questions as we do. Why was Jim's offense so utterly unforgivable?"

Helen Kerrall's voice sounded hard and strange to her sister's ears when she answered, at last:

"Because it was—another woman."

There was silence between the two for some minutes. Presently the older woman returned to the attack from the one standpoint from which Helen seemed to be accessible.

"Then your love for your baby must settle the question, Helen. You feel that the boy should have his father. There seems to be only one way by which his father and he can be kept together. You are the link, dear."

"It is I who have been cruelly, treacherously wronged, and it is I who must pay for the wrong done to myself, and bear all the shame and anguish of righting it as nearly as possible for others. That is justice, sister, isn't it?"

"Think it over, dear. Here is baby come to help his mother do what is right and wise."

The folding doors, which had been partly open, were pushed wider, and a sturdy, rosy atom of very masculine babyhood stood bubbling and balancing in the entrance. He shrieked with glee at the sight of his mother on the floor, and ran to her. Mary Walter kissed the two of them, and softly stole out of the room, leaving the young mother and her baby cuddled on the hearthrug. They made a beautiful picture; the blond mother and dusky baby, with the fire flames bringing out the gold radiance of Helen's hair and making the boy's dark mane blacker.

Outside the early-spring mists were yielding their grayness to the afternoon sun. The yellow-white light, revealingly clear, but not yet warm with the full spring's tenderness, came in at the great windows and filled the long room.

On demand Helen's hands made shadow rabbits, and little men, and boats on the wall, to the shouting glee of Jim Kerrall's son, until the child, wearied with too much joy, dropped off into one of babyhood's sudden sweet slumbers. Helen watched him as he lay on the rug by her side, his little square chin with the cleft in it, like Jim's, held up combatively, his plump, strong little arms outspread; sleeping there in the child's contented trustfulness that has never yet felt the sinister touch of doubt.

"Oh, my baby," she whispered, "is there anything too hard for me to do for you? What sort of a mother am I to think of my own feelings when you need your father?"

Even while she spoke, however, she knew that the struggle was as bitter as ever in her heart. She might decide to return to Jim Kerrall for Ralph's sake, but never again, she silently declared, could there be that whole yielding of herself to love and to him by whose potency it had been her pride to be possessed. Reason, and memory, and pain had erected a shadowy barrier which could not be torn down.

"Think it over, dear," Mary had said.

Think! Had she not thought till she felt as if her brains were bleeding away in drops? How could Mary know? Yet—Mary *should* know, at least partly. For Will Walter had not always been constant. There had been a time when Mary could have left him justly, even as she had now left Jim. Helen remembered how Stella, the other sister, unmarried, like herself then, had asked Mary point-blank and in anger why she did not divorce Will, seeing that she had no children to consider. Mary had answered that there were "other reasons" why she felt it her duty to remain with Will. Other reasons? No wonder Mary could not really understand how she, Helen, felt! And she could not explain. It was not a thing that could be said, even by one sister to another.

If Jim had loved her less she might have been able to pardon his fault. It was the very mightiness of his feeling

for her that made it impossible. She had told Mary that afternoon that Jim had sometimes made her afraid. It was not only in their rare moments of strife that she had feared him. She knew, if his man's world did not, what forces were unleashed, when that cool composure of Jim Kerrall's broke. She had been the valley of his storms. Even now she remembered with a thrill of victory that she had once taunted him into losing that wonderful control of his, and set his anger loose upon her!

That was in the first year of their marriage, when she had given her big husband from the New Mexican plains his first experience of a highborn lady's subtle insolence and finely steeled self-will. It had enraged him like treachery. He had punished it as such. Fair Helen, of ancient lineage, and high name, and the autocratic spirit of that medieval princess, whose beauty was sung in all the isles of the sea, had been reduced to the apprehension that she was the Woman-who-belonged-to Jim Kerrall! The medieval princess had encountered the cave man. Her lesson well learned, she had been elevated from this humble state to the dignity of one to whom the experience of a willing obedience was permitted.

The native woman in her had struggled up sufferingly, through the centuries of overdressed emotions and artifices, and had responded to this law of the man with the simple ethics of Eden. To learn what law means to the primitive and love to the unashamed had been good for Helen Kerrall; she had cast off her dolldom and grown a soul. Then the wonder of being Jim Kerrall's wife had deepened into the glory of being the mother of his child; his child for whose sake she must now forget the indignity he had put upon her, and return to him.

No, she could never yield herself wholly to Jim Kerrall again. He had made that impossible by the meaning he himself had given to their marriage covenant. He could not expect, much less command, the surrender and submission which, as a loyal husband, he had once been able to exact from her.

He had forfeited his man's right in her, his wife. Faith and joy were gone from her heart, love remained alone, to grieve.

She looked at the child and softly stroked back Jim's curls from the baby's face which some day would look so like Jim's; and the woe weighed more heavily on her heart. This was their child, the fruit of that profound, primordial, beautiful, and terrible oneness with which Jim had taken her to himself. The child was now ordering her back to Jim—after that oneness had been broken, and the beauty of love destroyed by the paltry valuation her master had put upon her. The child!

Helen rose softly, leaving the boy sleeping still in the sun and firelight, and went to the little desk at the end of the room. There she wrote a brief, explicit note to Jim Kerrall.

DEAR JIM: It is not very easy for me to say this, after the past event. But I feel that little Ralph must have his father. For his sake I can do anything; so, if you will not consent to the arrangement I proposed before I left your house, I will return as your wife for the child's sake. I cannot divorce my son's father. It is terrible for a child to grow up so—with parents separated. I am sure you feel this also. There is no need for delay. Send me an answer by Martin, or telephone to me to tell me what hour you will be at the house to receive me, and I will come home quietly with Ralph. I will make no more reproaches. All shall be forgotten; it is for the child. HELEN,

Martin appeared in answer to her ring.

"Martin, take this letter to Mr. Kerrall's office. Give it to Mr. Kerrall himself, and wait for an answer."

"Yes, Miss Helen," and the old servitor bowed himself out.

Martin had helped to twine smilax from the chandeliers to the marriage bell in the simple parlor where Helen Kerrall, lovely and dowerless daughter of an old family, had married her rugged, moneyed Westerner. He smiled now, because of his pleasant errand, and set off briskly.

Helen, carrying the sleeping boy in her arms, went upstairs to superintend her packing. In passing, she stopped at her sister's room to announce her de-

cision. Mary thought she looked like some lovely suffering saint from an old church fresco, as she stood in the doorway, her lips drooping a little, her blue eyes paled of their fire by tears and resignation.

"Mary," she said gently, "I have sent Martin with a note to Jim. I am going back this evening. I know now that I am doing right to go, so it won't be too hard."

"I believe your decision is a wise one, dear," Mary answered, and kissed her. Being, above all things, tactful, she said no more.

Helen had completed her packing long before Martin returned. Her maid was laying out her cloak and hat when the old servant tapped on her door.

"You have been ages, Martin."

"Yes, Miss Helen. Mr. Kerrall was a long time r'adin' the letter, Miss Helen; and askin' me questions about you and little Master Ralph."

Helen extended her hand for Jim's note.

"The answer, Martin?"

"Oh, Mr. Kerrall said there was no answer. Is that all, Miss Helen?"

"That's all," Helen answered mechanically; and Martin departed.

"No answer." Helen sat down weakly on the edge of the bed. What did Jim mean? She asked this question finally of Mary, who stood over her with smelling salts, alarmed by her pallor.

"You see, you see," she muttered; "he cares nothing for the child; no more than for me. 'No answer,' when I told him I was coming back to him, in spite of everything, for his child's sake! *His* child, as well as mine!"

"Yes, dear, you just told him you were coming, so there was no answer required, really. He took you at your word, and is waiting at home for you. Why not telephone and——"

"No! I've endured enough! I've humbled myself enough!"

"Let me. For Ralph's sake, dear. We must not let foolish misunderstanding make a failure now. Let me

telephone and just ask him if he is expecting you."

To this Helen gave tacit consent. She was bewildered by the torrent of emotions and fears which had broken upon her when Martin had said "No answer," and could no longer guide her way. Mary returned joyfully.

"It's precisely as I thought, dear! He is expecting you, he says."

"Then I suppose we'd better go at once," Helen replied automatically. "Jim doesn't like to be kept waiting." As she kissed her sister farewell, she said: "It's terribly hard, Mary. But you think I'm doing the right thing, don't you?"

"I'm sure of it, little sister."

Sutton, Jim's manservant, met her in the hall.

"There's a gentleman to see Mr. Kerrall on business, ma'am; it may be twenty minutes or more. They are in the library. There's a nice fire in the morning room."

"Then I'll go in there and wait for Mr. Kerrall. But baby is so sleepy, Lucy," she said to the nurse, "that I think you must take him up to bed."

"Just as you say, ma'am!"

The old nurse carried the little peacemaker upstairs.

It seemed a century to Helen Kerrall before the door opened and Jim Kerrall entered. She had already decided what she would say to him the moment he appeared. Her eyes met his vivid light-gray ones with their perceptive, dominating gaze, and she was silent. He looked about swiftly; a strange light came into his face.

"You came alone?" he asked briefly.

"Ralph is upstairs in bed," she answered; her voice was tremulous.

"Oh!" The strange light faded.

He crossed the room and stood by the grate, opposite to her. She found herself asking vaguely what made him look so different from the Jim she had seen in her thoughts during the past month; and concluded that the change she noted must be due to the fact that it was no longer her lover, but just the father of her child, whom she saw.

Jim Kerrall gave the impression of a

big man without possessing great height or breadth. There was a sense of power in the movements and stillnesses of his body which made people think of him as physically large, since the human mind—being very material in its reasonings—associates the idea of mightiness with bulk. An elderly maiden who wrote verses for magazines had embarrassed him once by telling him before a large company that he made her think of “a sword in a scabbard.” It was not an inapt figure of speech to apply to Jim Kerrall, though “a knife in the sheath” might better have fitted his Westernism. His muscularity was steellike, poised, unified under his tanned exterior like a knife blade; and the leap of it was like the lightning leap of a knife. Jim’s eyes were a very light brilliant gray, without a trace of the blue or green which generally tempers light-gray eyes. They were strangely, not softly, pale and luminous, as if they had taken on the color and meaning of the desert where he had been born, and where he had lived until he wrested his fortune from it. They were inscrutable, alluring, like the desert; and, like the desert, Jim Kerrall seemed to comprehend, master, and absorb all persons and things that he received into his life. He was self-lawed; his codes were the codes of his nature. In that, too, he was the desert’s son. The sojourner in the desert can live by no law but the desert’s law of life. Codes and sentiments from elsewhere will not preserve him there when the desert is roused to storm.

Helen Kerrall had tried to bring governing codes from elsewhere into the life of the desert’s son; and had called on them in vain to shelter her when the storm broke. She could not view her action at all from his standpoint, and was as far from understanding Jim Kerrall as if they had never met.

“I did not answer your letter, Helen, because I couldn’t make any answer to that letter. What I have to say, I couldn’t write clearly. I wanted to tell it to you.” Jim spoke tersely after rather a long wait.

“I might not have come,” she said,

with a flash of her former fire. “You said ‘No answer.’ ”

“I trusted that you would—I had to risk that.”

“You *knew* I would, for Ralph’s sake, you mean. How ungenerous of you to humiliate me through my love for my child—your child. It is bitter enough without your adding anything to it now.”

She had not meant to utter reproaches; but his self-containment maddened her. She wanted to strike and wound through his control, that he might not continue to stand there and look at her so steadily.

“It ought to be bitter for you to come back and offer yourself to me the way you have to-day,” he replied quietly.

“Jim!” she burst forth. “Did you imagine I would ever *forgive* what you have done?”

“I haven’t asked you to forgive me.”

“No! You’ll consider your own pride—but mine——”

“I have no pride toward you, Helen. Except the pride of possession—which you seem to think you can take away from me! I shall never ask your pardon for my personal conduct; because you don’t make laws for me. I make my own. Grant—for the sake of argument—that I am all you have charged me. I can’t see a woman in a position where she can confer pardon upon the man who has taken her and made her his. To me, that is just the talk you hear in the theater. I can’t see it at all. It’s against nature.”

For the moment Helen was almost too astounded for anger or hurt.

“You don’t intend—you *never* intend to ask my forgiveness?”

Jim did not answer; he only looked at her. Because she could not read his gaze, her own wavered.

“That isn’t what you came here to talk to me about,” he said presently.

“No—no, not that! It’s Ralph!” she asserted vehemently. “It’s Ralph! I must hold tight to the thought of him or I shall not be able to go through with this.”

"You offer to come back as my wife for the child's sake, because you think it will hurt him for us to be separated."

"It would be too terrible for him! I will make any sacrifice to screen him from that."

"I don't agree with you." His tone was metallic with forced control. "I can't see where it hurts a child for his parents to be separated or divorced. It isn't hurting a lot of children we both know about. What hurts a child is to grow up in a home where the man and his wife are not in harmony."

"Jim," she gasped, "do you know what you are saying?"

"Our—divorce—will not hurt Ralph. Whatever makes you think it could?"

"Jim!"

There was a pause while the man seemed to be silently testing his own strength to carry out a predetermined course; then he said firmly:

"That's nonsense. Any sacrifice on your part is absolutely unnecessary. Besides, I won't accept you on those terms."

Helen's face was as white as the handkerchief she twisted in her fingers.

"I will not accept you—for *his* sake. That's final!"

There was a pause while Helen stared at him, and he met her gaze unflinchingly. She began to tremble, and felt that he knew it. He moved a step in her direction. His eyes shone, but not softly—like desert sand under noon-day sun.

"Helen—do you stay?"

Helen saw his look and knew its meaning. It was a look she remembered. Again she felt his inscrutable, absorbing mightiness overwhelming her even as before he had sinned! The fear rose in her that she might yield to that power again; and so cast all reason and wrangled memory to the winds of Jim Kerrall's passion to make a far-flying, forgotten dust. She rose to do desperate battle for herself, her pride, her code, against this to her incomprehensible, terrible, uncompromising being, who declared himself sole lawmaker to them both.

"How dare you ask that! How dare

you think it! For the child *only—only* for the child—I came here—" she burst forth tempestuously.

"You were mine before you were a mother. He came because you were my wife."

"You've lost me. I'll never be your wife again. Not even for Ralph's sake. No! Now, after the way you have outraged, and insulted, and rebuffed me. I will not come back to you! *I will not come back to you!* Not even for the child! I despise you, Jim Kerrall! Oh, how utterly I despise you! You are false, and ruthless, and cruel. You never loved me! You never loved Ralph! He's better off a thousand times without such a father. You might have had *me* again—if you had loved the child—"

"I'll have you again because you love me!" he declared passionately.

"No! I don't love you. How dare you say I love you? I have come only because my duty—"

"You'll come to me now because you want to—or"—he paused an instant, then, with a visible effort, concluded—"or you must go."

"Jim—Jim—don't say that. Think of our baby. Ours, Jim; yours and mine. He cries sometimes, and I know it's for you. I can't bring him up alone. Jim—think of yourself, your own position. It would harm you. And me, too. I can't face life alone. I'm afraid. Some day, perhaps, I might feel differently. I'd—I'd—try. Where are you going, Jim?"

Jim Kerrall strode to the door and opened it.

"I'm opening the door for you—to go." His voice was hoarse.

She stretched out frantic hands toward him; and pleaded:

"Jim—don't—break me!"

He whirled back upon her like a storm.

"Yes, I will! I'll find out what is in your soul. You left me. It doesn't make any difference what for. You left me. I've seen women who were beaten, and neglected, and sometimes feared for their lives, who would not

have done to those men what you did to me. You left me. How dared you leave me? You were the light, and the heart, and the soul of me. Mine! And you went away and let me suffer for you. What kind of a love is that? Now—you come back with my boy in your arms and—don't break you! You'll break—and you'll be mine as you never were before. Or, you'll go!"

"Jim, don't—oh, you *are* terrible! I can't stand it, Jim. It's killing me to be without you. It isn't Ralph. I—I thought it was at first. But it isn't. I lied when I said it was for the child's sake. It doesn't make any difference what you have done or what you might ever do. I love you. I must be with you. I didn't understand it till I left you. I want to be yours again, I'll do anything, I'll bear anything. I'll never question you. I'll obey you like a child. Only let me be with you—your wife—again!"

"This sounds like the truth between you and me ought to sound."

"Oh, how hard you are!" she sobbed. "As hard as granite. You wronged me first!"

His eyes flashed.

"Hard, you say. Yes, I expect I am. All my life—my life back there on the desert—made me what you call 'hard.' It was a hard, solitary life. There were few things in it, but every one of them was precious and worth long, lonely waiting for, and hard fighting for, and eternal holding. I've spent the months without sight of a man's face or any sound but my horse's hoofs. There was no woman—only a dream. I never saw a woman I wanted to ask to leave the little towns or the ranchos and go back with me to the desert, into my life. There never was one I could give up the dream for—till I saw you. That is why I am hard, instead of a soft-handed, sloppy-souled turncoat, like some of your city men whom you have confused with me, who take any insult from their wives, men to whom passion and fidelity are jests, and who crawl with lies when they are found out. Did you live with me four years without finding out I was not that kind?"

"Jim, you can't mean—" Helen could not continue. The sudden hope which leaped in her at his words made her weak. She sank back into her chair. In the same moment her face glowed with the light of that hope and darkened with fear. "Don't deceive me now, Jim," she pleaded. "There's no need. I've come back. Believing everything against you, I've come back."

"That is the way you went 'away,'" he interrupted her; his tone was bitter. "Believing everything against me! I don't understand you, Helen; not any better than you understand me. I ask you now what I have asked myself uselessly a hundred times during this month. You have meant all that beauty, and faith, and good can mean to a man. You are all that woman means. Every right thing in my life from the beginning seems to have come back living to me in you. That is how I think of you. But what sort of a valuation do you put on your love and your being mine—as I have made you mine—and yet trust me so little that you believe the first lie dropped in your ear by one of New York's village gossips?"

"Jim—don't—don't condemn me so! I was jealous, terribly, frantically jealous. I—"

"You knew Mrs. Peckham and her three brothers have their money in my mine. You knew we had business relations. It is something worse than jealousy. Jealousy a man can deal with. No, it is your East. It's bred in all of you—that callous suspicion, that superwise littleness which says: 'We know you're rotten. Why? Because we expect it of you!' I've seen it in your men, from the moment we touched in business. But—that is nothing. There's a way to meet it, and to manage men, and that is never to let them get to you. But a woman—you—my wife—a part of me—you proved you had always believed I was a rotter."

"It would have been so easy to have told me. Oh, why didn't you?"

"Would you have believed me?"

Helen was silent.

"You had said everything else to me,

and I refused to give you the chance to throw the word 'lie' in my face. I wasn't born to the life you understand; and, though I may stay in this town all my days, I won't live that life. My wife must be *mine*. Her will must bend to mine. She must not judge me, but obey me. And it is my first business to deserve her trust. Your trust, Helen, that means almost more than your love. I may seem brutal to you, because you don't understand what you did to me. I had no choice but to compel you to break your own pride and return to me in complete surrender if I could. It might be possible to build up faith on a love that was strong enough to force you back to me even while you believed I held you too cheaply to be on the square with you. This isn't any smart-set marriage, Helen Kerrall, and it is not going to be one! I said 'No answer' to-day because I knew that would make you come and tell me the *truth*, if you were *mine*; and it did. You and the boy—love of you and your love—that is my life. You think I've made a brutal fight for them. But that's the only way I know how to fight—to win."

Helen had been hanging on his looks and his words. She accepted his censure because its very rigor meant that she was loved unfalteringly. Jim's severity was balm to the wounds it made. It calmed her shivering nerves. Something new stirred in her, deeper, stronger than her former high-strung passionateness, with its attendant assertive prides and jealousies, fears and resentments. Hardly knowing what she said, she began to speak—reaching out to him—the woman to her man.

"I see that I have been very guilty. I did not understand—I don't think I can quite understand—your code. It's too big for me, Jim. I can't be sorry and ashamed as I should be, because I am so happy that you love me—only me. I know, by your code, I should never have doubted. But I—I can't live up to that. Perhaps it is what you call my 'East.' It's the world, Jim—I knew doubt long before I knew love. When I was seventeen I knew about Mary's

trouble. And a little later, Elsie Lovell—I had been her bridesmaid. And I saw how women love men, and how faithless men are; and that, while some women divorce men, others bear the shame and suffering because—oh, for many reasons—for their children, they declare, when they have children.

"But it's not. They are glad to be able to use the children as an excuse. And I always said to myself that *I* wouldn't. I used to dream of love, as every girl does, and how wonderful it would be—for a little while. And I used to pray, almost, that I would know how to get the most joy out of that little brief time when it should come to me—because it couldn't last! Men are so. They marry not the one and only woman—no—just the woman they prefer to have as a wife.

"And I vowed marriage should be over for me as soon as—I would not stay and bear it tamely, for love of a man who could take another woman in his arms as he had taken me. Then it came, I thought; and I said I'd leave you, because I had sworn that to myself long ago. But—oh, Jim—I understood those other women. I offered to stay here as Ralph's mother only—because I couldn't live without you, without seeing you, hearing you speak. I wanted to be with you and save my pride, too. Can't you understand? You are my husband, the man to whom I have belonged. The worst I believed of you didn't change that. Trust, faith, these are everything to you. But I—I couldn't trust. I was too afraid. There seemed so little chance of holding happiness. I can only love you in my way, by my nature. I must bear anything, everything, and stay with you."

"Helen, dear, don't say any more."

He was more moved than she had ever seen him.

"I must make you understand. I would do anything—make any sacrifice—for Ralph—because he is *your* boy. I never had the dreams and hopes other girls talked of, about children. I never wanted one really—till you taught me how a woman must love such a man as

you. Then I began to yearn for it. And when baby came I loved him first because he was yours. Oh, yes—I lied to-day. You see that now. I came here to-night with him in my arms, and lied. I used him to get back to you. Oh, Jim, it is so terrible to be a woman, and to love one man with all your heart."

Jim Kerrall came to her. He took her hands, drew her closely to him, and held her in the strong, possessive grasp that her trembling being craved. She yielded to his strength and clung to him for refuge.

"You must not tell me any more," he said brokenly. "No man is fit to hear such words. If I had known—I had no right to let you tell me so much. You have given me a bigger thing than the trust I asked for—too big a thing for a woman to give to any man."

"I love you so—it makes me afraid."

His lips silenced hers.

"How wonderful a woman is! Too fine for a man to know. I feel as if I had stumbled brutally into a holy place. How am I going to make you know what you and our boy mean to me?"

Presently the door opened, and Lucy, the child's nurse, entered. Lucy, like Martin, was an old servant and privileged. She looked rebuke at the love-

flushed and beautiful wife in Jim Kerrall's arms.

"I knew Master Ralph wasn't sleepy when you sent him upstairs. He has been crying for you some time, ma'am. This is always his playtime when you make shadow rabbits for him. He's very impatient to-night."

"Oh!" Helen cried in self-reproach. "The poor child! So it is! I forgot completely. It's your fault," she whimpered at her husband.

"Come," said Jim, smiling upon her with a tenderness she had never seen before. "Let us go and make shadow pictures for our son. Now it's right for you to give him your attention!" he added, with a touch of humor.

"Oh, he'll just *love* to have you help make rabbits for him! He'll be so happy!"

She turned, dimpling and sparkling at him in one of her sudden flashes of mischief, the more bewitching because of tear traces.

"There, you see? It *is* for his sake—so that baby can have your jack rabbits as well as my bunnies!" she cried, daring him.

Then because of the way he looked at her she fled from him up the stairs toward the room where the voice of the child sounded lustily.



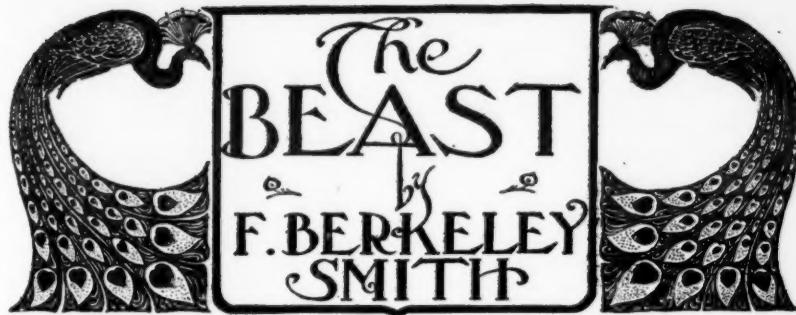
THE TRAVELER

I HAVE learned much from traveling,
And very truly can declare
Although I love my native land—
I know that other lands are fair.

I have learned much from traveling,
As each and ev'ry tourist should,
Although our ways appeal to me—
I know that other ways are good.

I have learned much from traveling,
(I hope I am not indiscreet!)
Although I am engaged to Maude—
I know that other maids are sweet!

HAROLD SUSMAN.



The BEAST

by
F. BERKELEY
SMITH

MRS. MAWLYN had become the talk of the hotel; almost as much as the coming ball.

Even so worldly and seasoned an old soldier as Colonel Trench-Gadsby, but lately retired from his majesty's service, and who had experienced some thirty-odd years of fighting and women in India, was frank in confessing to me that he considered Mrs. Mawlyn's daily conduct as "simply scandalous." Mrs. Mawlyn's flirtation with young Cyril Reeves having progressed with daring rapidity during the last week, we all felt sorry for Mawlyn.

"Shocking bad form, old chap—these hotel flirtations," declared the colonel.

"I never for the life of me could see the charm of making love in public," he added, as we stood smoking together on the broad, high veranda of the Grand Hotel Beausite-Victoria, looking down upon the Mediterranean, deep blue as a sea of molten sapphire. Far below us lay nestled, beside a turquoise cove, the picturesque, sleepy little village of La Brisette.

It was one of those rare, balmy mornings in February on the Riviera, the air fragrant with the perfume of acres of violets, and spicy with the scent of the eucalyptus trees. Below us rolled away the hillside, unfurling itself like some giant rug from the Orient, gayly patterned in beds of violets, roses, and mimosa, and deep-bordered by dark fir trees, until the end of the rug, a mile below, dipped its fringe in the limpid

waters of the turquoise cove that lay like a jewel protected from the open sea. At our backs, in stern contrast to all this, rose and fell away to the far horizon a grim, cold wilderness of mountains, their jagged summits clear cut against the cloudless blue sky.

The colonel tapped out the ashes of his pipe deftly against his heel, restuffed his favorite brierwood, dusted the stray grains of a chosen mixture from the knees of his immaculate white-flannel trousers, bent his clean-featured, handsome head over the flame of a solid, English wax vesta, and straightening his slim, wiry body to its full height of six feet, smiled quietly, and continued in his soft voice, high-keyed, but never harsh:

"I say! What a silly ass young what's-his-name must be to be led around by Mrs. Mawlyn. She is pretty, I'll admit. Rippin' figgar! But she's ye-ars his senior. She's all of eight and twenty, mark my word, and I'll wager he's not over one and twenty. I say! Poor Mawlyn did get a cropper, didn't he, when he married her? Rather! Rattlin' good sort, Mawlyn! You ought to meet him. Met him last week at the billiard tournament. Wish you'd been there. We had a peg together, Mawlyn and Lord Rick, and the old admiral, and the archduke. I say, you mustn't give it away that you know the archduke's identity. He's, as I told you, traveling incognito under the name of Mr. von Reisen. Mawlyn told us a most clever story about a nigger—and—

a party, do you see? I wish I could remember it; one of your American stories—deuced clever. Poor Mawlyn's been laid up ever since, scarcely been out of his room, I believe. He's got sciatica. Do you understand? Devilish annoying, sciatica. I've had it, and that beast of a woman is too much occupied with her own bally love affair to half attend to him.

"I've heard he's almost constantly in a most wretched state of pain. It seems the housemaid on *their* floor told the housemaid on *my* floor—I say, old chap, what if we went down to have a look at the tennis? Oh! I *beg* your pardon! confounded awkward of me; this little pipe has a most awkward habit of spilling its fire. I do hope I didn't burn you. Have you heard that Captain Maidstone's daughters won the mixed doubles yesterday? Wasn't it clever of them! Gad! This morning's quite too lovely."

He ceased speaking, and we edged our way out among the groups of English chatting with staid reserve in the cool of the veranda. Past the jolly, white-haired old admiral, his wife and daughters. Past laughing groups of tall, rosy, big-boned young English girls, keen as their brothers over sports. Past squat, fixed groups of spinsters, and dowdy old dowagers in lavender and black morning caps, in wicker arm-chairs, who made tea in their rooms, gathered their store of sugar from the breakfast table, and invited all their friends from the neighboring pensions upon Saturday afternoons, when tea was free downstairs. Afternoons when they invariably criticized the tea as "vile."

Gossip never needed a more fertile field for clicking tongues over the tea-cups to flay Mrs. Mawlyn alive in, than this big, luxurious hotel, so popular with the English, who, when they discover anything excellent in France at a minimum price, settle on it like flies and stick to it with true British tenacity.

It was, moreover, somewhat like being elected to a country club to secure rooms; even nodding acquaintances congratulated you on entering, when

you could prove that your trunks were upstairs, and the key to your room in your pocket.

"I'm so glad the Crichton-Pooles are in at last!" you overheard in passing. "Fancy, after waiting three weeks at that stuffy old Hotel Angleterre!" Or, "My dear, have you heard that the Countess of Baylesford told Lady Cheshwit-Dun yesterday that she would not give up her rooms on the fifteenth even if she had to sleep in a bathroom—all the bathrooms are occupied, I'm told—rather annoying, my dear, in the morning, I should say, getting up and out for the others' baths. Have you heard that Lord Rick's eldest son wired for a suite and bath, and only got the bath? Delicious!"

Thus, you see, once in, no one dared leave. It was too difficult to return, and in no other hostelry within a day's journey, "mind you," was there such a jolly lot of the right sort, as the colonel declared and added:

"One meets so many rotters."

"Jolly!" I winced. Yes, Mrs. Mawlyn was jolly—jolly enough, but she didn't seem to please. The rest, for the most part, that the colonel alluded to, possessed that conservative and reserved jolliness which the British empire has for generations taken first prize in distributing along the Riviera in those exclusive private hotels where they exhibit in a glass case the wash set once used overnight by royalty, next to the hymnals, the novels of Sir Walter Scott, and the Rollo books. Such places as these when it rains are morgues.

The colonel and I were soon on our way along the shady hill path, that short cut down to the tennis courts, and I may say that, of all the little hill paths that wound and zigzagged over the grounds, this little path we were on was the most popular. The woods through which it crept were dense. There were short turns, bringing up abruptly back of moss-covered bowlders, and stray, leafy nooks, long before the tennis courts were reached, capable of hiding from the inquisitive gaze of the indis-

creet those whose heart-to-heart affairs Cupid is always anxiously engaged in screening from the eyes of the passing stranger.

Suddenly, as we made a sharp turn to the left, the colonel and I halted. Beyond, hidden by the matted leaves a few yards ahead, two people were in sharp and earnest conversation, a man and a woman. Only the fragments of two sentences in a man's voice reached us: "A thousand guineas," and, a second later, "Same address, you—" Then an abrupt pause, quick as the intake of a breath, and then the soft, merry, teasing voice of a woman:

"N-n-no! No! No! Not another kiss! Not even one."

"Please," pleaded the other. "I say, mayn't I?"

"Dear! What a little gourmand you are!"

Then a short, intense silence, during which brief interval the colonel cocked his eye and we stood motionless, hesitating whether to retreat or advance.

Again the voice of the woman:

"Ah, you silly, silly boy! Look at me! I love your eyes; what am I to do with you? There! That is the last. The very, very last. *Oui, monsieur!*"

A rippling laugh.

"Say, 'Thank you, ma'am!'"

"Thank you, ma'am! I say, but you are adorable."

To third persons like ourselves this sudden and sentimental dialogue seemed strangely forced, and as artificial as the lines in a comedy.

"Come along," whispered the colonel, rapidly striding ahead with as much caution as if he had accidentally stumbled on a wounded tigress and her kitten.

Too late! Beyond, not ten paces ahead, we drew aside, much to the colonel's evident embarrassment, to let two figures pass—those of Mrs. Mawlyn and young Cyril Reeves.

She, with her quick intuition of a woman, had scented our presence, and was already laughing over an imaginary nothing. As we drew aside and raised our hats in a formal good morning, Mrs. Mawlyn lowered her eyes, return-

ing our greeting with strained dignity, and, as if through her sense of humor; or her own embarrassment, passed me with the vestige of a smile playing about the nervous corners of her sly little mouth—all pink and pearls when she opened it to laugh.

Mr. Cyril Reeves, taken for the moment off his guard, dropped his monocle, and, with a bored grimace, recovered it at the end of its black silk ribbon, and resolutely set it back, tucking it in firmly over his round, boyish eye, and regarded us with a flush of color, mingled with a look of devil-may-care disdain, while I kept my eyes on Mrs. Mawlyn, who looked as fresh as a young girl this morning, her lithe figure gowned in a simple frock of pale-rose liberty silk, her small, blond head shaded by a broad garden hat circled with moss roses, beneath which gleamed her wonderful eyes, large and almond-shaped as an Oriental's, and, I give you my word, positively green at times. That liquid green of jade, with the saffron fire of a cat's eye glinting about the cornea. Again, especially at night, whether it was due to the reflected light from her exquisite, bare neck, the color of ivory, or purely the effect of the electricity, I do not know, but I could have sworn her eyes were deep violet, their long lashes, in marked contrast to her fair hair, giving her the appearance of a blond Italian, though she was as English as the colonel. This half-Oriental, half-Italian cast to her finely chiseled features—the head of a swallow in its trimness with the complexion of a tea rose—was further enhanced by the long pendant earrings which she invariably wore, sometimes of jade or barraque pearls or fire opals. She seemed to have a passion for earrings, and changed them constantly, decking the lobes of her small ears with a new pair almost daily.

As for young Reeves, whom we watched as he disappeared around a bend in the path at her trim heels, it was easily seen how jealously proud the woman was of this well-built, handsome, dark-haired, dark-eyed, fair-skinned English boy, who had in the

incredibly short space of a few days become her devoted slave.

"What an awful little cad!" remarked the colonel, as we strode on, and, a moment later, came out upon the tennis grounds, where we discovered the archduke and that delightful little old maid, Miss Munt, sitting together under the glow of a scarlet umbrella.

"Hello! There they are!" exclaimed the colonel. "Excellent chap, the archduke. We were together in Simla years ago. Miss Munt and yourself are the only ones to whom I've told his identity, as he insists, as I told you, in traveling incognito under the name of Von Reisen."

"Of course, I understand," I returned. "No one shall be the wiser on my account, I promise you."

"Good morning!" shouted the archduke, as he caught sight of us approaching.

"Hello! So here you are!" exclaimed the colonel.

The archduke rose from his camp chair, which creaked under his big frame, and came forward heartily, with both hands outstretched in greeting, his round, florid, genial face wreathed in a good-natured smile, his blue eyes dancing, eyes that were young in contrast to his short-cropped, gray hair and mustache. He was even taller than the colonel, a heavy fellow with big hands and feet, and a charm of manner that captivated you the moment he smiled and spoke.

"Do sit down, won't you?" pleaded the cheery, little old maid. "I'm having quite all I can manage to keep Mr. von Reisen in a good humor. He's fearfully cross this morning. Come, confess," she laughed.

"Me!" roared his excellency. "Oh, Miss Munt! Am I as bad as dot? Dot is unfair! Oh, yes! Exactly, dot is unfair!" he repeated in his broken English, though his French was as fluent as a Parisian's. "Could I effer be in bad humor, when I haf de pleasure to be in company of so charming a lady?" he added graciously, with a low bow, planting a heavy hand over his heart.

"Come—sit!" he insisted, gripping

with his big hands the backs of two vacant camp stools, and planting them before us. Indeed, he seemed more like a good-natured, overgrown boy than an august personage, with the power and right of way next to an emperor.

It is safe to say that few had lived as lively a pace as "Mr. von Reisen." He had sown several crops of wild oats in his life in Paris and Monte Carlo, London and Petersburg, with incidental transplantings in the season at Dinard and Biarritz. For years he had even astonished Monte Carlo by his extravagant life and his high play—losing and winning fortunes at baccarat, so the colonel told me, always with that happy-go-lucky geniality and generosity which carried him safely through his gaming, his escapades, and his love affairs.

He had become a philosopher at last. The turn of a card for a fortune no longer thrilled him; he had even lost his passion for racing and beautiful women. Society he abhorred. He now smoked little, one enormous cigar after dinner, and drank less, one gigantic whisky and soda with the cigar, and no more. He had had enough of the feverish life; much of which his excellency told me himself, and the rest the colonel confided to me, and it was not at all surprising to either of us that the only woman whose companionship he preferred and was seen in was Miss Munt's.

There existed an innocent, clean, and delicate camaraderie between these two. She walked with him, joked with him, teased him in her kindly way, played dominos with him for points—for he refused to play with any one for money, far less with poor, little Miss Munt—taught him a new game of solitaire, much of the English language that had escaped him, and gave him withal more than one bit of motherly advice.

What a charming, little old maid! Very small, very thin, very bright, naturally not at all good looking; and yet, when you looked into her snappy, gray eyes, and saw all the goodness in them, and how small they were to reflect her big heart, and all the cheer and unselfishness she had stored around her

frail ribs, you could not help agreeing with the archduke, the colonel, and myself, that plain, little Miss Munt was worth all the rest of the bejeweled and décolleté trash boiled into one.

The archduke attracted by Mrs. Mawlyn?

"Poof!" he used to exclaim with a snort, which expressed his opinion of her briefly.

Poof! His excellency was right. That was precisely what Mrs. Mawlyn amounted to—Poof! That svelte blond doll, with the eyes of an odalisque and the heart of a sorceress.

Another week has passed, and Cyril Reeves has become more her abject slave than ever. His flirtation, which began with such irresponsible ease, has assumed a colossal importance, the woman has blotted out all else in his mind, and the very fact that she is practically ostracized now by the others increases his devotion. Mawlyn, from all accounts, is worse, and is rarely seen downstairs; and it is a damnable exhibition of brutal selfishness to see his own wife, whose duty it is to be constantly at his bedside, spending hours in the most secluded corners of the salon with Cyril Reeves, crocheting or winding yards of pink worsted about his uplifted thumbs, their silence of perfect understanding broken now and then by whispered words of endearment; and yet there's that little thoroughbred of ours, Miss Munt, stopping often to chat with her, full of sincere solicitude for Mawlyn, and asking repeatedly if she can do anything for him; and, as the colonel said, Mawlyn would not be her first patient, for it seems Miss Munt has already distinguished herself as nurse during the Boer War.

Mrs. Mawlyn ought to go down on her knees to her, since the little old maid is almost without exception the only woman who speaks to her now. Torture for Cyril Reeves, you may well imagine, these kindly interruptions of Miss Munt, but anything which is torture to the boy now I can see amuses Mrs. Mawlyn, just as I believe she enjoys abandoning Mawlyn in pain.

I have pictured him more than once, helpless, depending solely on a bell that sometimes is answered and sometimes is not. Feeling right and left for every little attention. Ringing, calling, often in agony, hammering the floor with his stick to attract attention, and, worse, far worse, than all this, I am firmly convinced he loves the woman—loves her desperately—hopelessly. Owing to Cyril Reeves, he sees his wife but at brief, rare intervals. The long hours that intervene when the Beast is absent must be far more terrible to endure than his spasms of pain. The studied cruelty of some women is beyond belief.

At first young Reeves lunched and dined alone at a small table in the big dining room, from whose vantage point beneath the candle shades and over the roses, he saw, I am told, Mrs. Mawlyn for the first time. Now that Mawlyn rarely comes to the dining room, Reeves and Mrs. Mawlyn actually lunch and dine together. In France it is enough to create an open scandal, innocent, no doubt, as they are.

To-night, to our intense surprise, Mawlyn made his appearance for the first time among our small circle of habitués, who prefer the sofaed nook under the main stairs as a cozy corner nightly for our whiskies and sodas. I was chatting there to-night, after dinner, with the good, old admiral, who, in his difficulty of trying to tell me what it really felt like to be in action and under fire, summed it up by blurting out:

"God bless me! It's—it's—like other days—only there's more smoke, and fire, and noise, d'ye see? And some of us old fellers on the bridge have to duck a bit now and then to keep our heads on."

In the laughter that followed from the archduke, the colonel, and myself, my eyes became riveted on the figure of a man in a tuxedo—a frail figure with bent shoulders, who was creeping down the stairs step by step, his mouth and jaw set firmly under a sandy mustache, his keen eyes for an instant half closed as if in pain.

The colonel sprang to his feet.

"My dear Mawlyn!" he cried. "Stay where you are until I can help you." As the colonel leaped nimbly up the carpeted stairs, followed by the archduke, the invalid waved a protesting free hand, and, in a voice that faltered from pain, said:

"Don't trouble—any of you—I am getting along famously to-night."

In spite of his continued protest, the colonel and the archduke thrust supporting hands beneath his armpits, until they gained the floor, and, with a sharp sigh of relief, and a grateful smile, Mawlyn slipped into the easiest chair among us.

"My wife—is—is playing bridge, I—believe—" he managed to say, while he regained his breath.

"Yes," grunted out the archduke and I in unison, the colonel tactfully softening the blunt effect by reaching for the decanter with:

"I say, Mawlyn—do have a drop. It'll buck you up."

"If I dared," hesitated the invalid.

"Poof!" exclaimed his excellency. "Dot is vot you need—a goot, big drink."

Mawlyn nodded, and the colonel poured a stiff drink of golden Scotch into a high glass.

Mawlyn grasped it, drank deep, and set it down with a hand that trembled slightly—evidently from weakness.

"You won't mind my telling you, but there's a bit of cork in your drink," said the colonel. "Here—have a clean spoon." And he passed him one on a saucer that none of us had touched. A brilliant silver spoon, fresh from being rubbed with a chamois skin.

"Thanks awfully," said Mawlyn, and began fishing for the bit of cork, which played hide and seek with a sliver of ice, and was no easy matter to capture. Finally, by the aid of a visiting card and the archduke's gold pencil, Mawlyn fished out the elusive fragment amid our bravos.

Half an hour later the admiral bade us good night. Mawlyn glanced at his watch.

"I dare say I must be getting to bed, too," said he. "I mustn't overdo it. I

say, if you happen to see Mrs. Mawlyn, please don't mention my being downstairs—or the whisky—it might only worry her."

I expected another snorting "Poof!" from the archduke, but he tactfully held his breath, and, with his usual charm of manner, half rose to bid Mawlyn good night, the colonel and myself helping Mawlyn to the elevator. When we turned back to our corner, I noticed that Mawlyn's glass and spoon had disappeared, and that his excellency was half dozing in his chair, his chin sunk deep in the bosom of his dress shirt. As I touched the bell for three fresh whiskies and sodas, he opened his blue eyes with a start.

"Dot long walk in de sun to-day," he murmured sleepily, and half nodded again.

"Why the devil can't you leave a table in peace until we've finished," I called to the boy in livery who had served us, my mind rankling under the fact of the missing glass and spoon, for I confess I am superstitious about the drained glass of a departed guest being always left untouched among the rest, as long as the company remains at table. This superstition, strange as it may seem, is as strong within me as my dread of passing under a ladder.

"I have not touched monsieur's table," declared the boy. "It must have been one of the other waiters."

He was an honest, willing boy, and I felt sorry for my outburst.

"I beg your pardon, my lad," said I.

"Thank you, monsieur," said the boy.

Again I turned to the archduke, but he was snoring. To-morrow night would occur the great ball of the season, and though it was not yet eleven, most of the guests had wisely retired.

The rapid dramatic events of the following day—that of the ball—still leave me wondering as I look back on them. Strange things happen in life that we little dream of, until the bare, blinding truth is flashed before our eyes, and we are left dazed, with our confidence in human nature again shaken.

The very day itself was atrocious, for

the morning of this smartest event of the season dawned, to the desolation of us all, in the grip of an ugly mistral and a thrashing rain, which left the walks and tennis courts deserted, and crowded the big salon, corridors, and billiard room with those forced indoors. Naturally, the sole topic of conversation was the coming event of the evening. Even Mrs. Mawlyn's frivolities were forgotten.

Now it is true that there is always a certain marked and jealous rivalry among women to appear their best at a smart ball given in a smart hotel. It is also a fact that they travel with their very best gown, and often their handsomest jewels, for just such occasions. I believe the desire to prove in public that they really possess these luxuries at home is at the bottom of it. However this may be, I could not help noticing more than one woman after luncheon stop at the hotel desk and receive a small, sealed package from the safe, sign a receipt, nod a pleasant "thank you" to the clerk, and stand waiting for the elevator.

As early as four o'clock, in a downpour that had even delayed the express, the full-stringed orchestra from Marseilles arrived, and, much to the relief of the committee, the delayed case from Paris containing the favors for the cotillion.

It is astonishing how low-neck, a pretty gown, and jewels change not only the features and figure, but the whole personality of some women. Even those you are accustomed to see daily are transformed into totally different people.

"You will see," I remarked to the colonel, as we sipped our liqueur after luncheon, "there will be dozens of women here to-night whom you know, whom you will have to glance at twice before recognizing."

"Not that beast of a wife of Mawlyn's," snapped the colonel. "I'll wager you I could spot her in a thousand."

"Did you notice the anxious look she wore at luncheon?" I ventured.

"I don't care a hang what she wears," retorted the colonel. "I'm jolly well

sick of that woman—if she's worrying, she's worrying over her gown. I'll bet you anything you like, Mawlyn's not rich, and she's vain enough to have taken his last penny to look better than another woman to-night."

"What are you two so serious about?" came the cheery voice of Miss Munt behind our chairs.

"Have you heard that poor Mr. Mawlyn is quite wretched again, and in bed?" said she. "Fancy, he seemed so much better, and was down yesterday."

"I should think he'd be dead with a wife like that," I returned.

"Do sit down, you nice person. Where's the duke?"

"Well—if you promise you won't tell I'll tell you. He's gone to the village to get a spool of pink sewing silk." She laughed. "He would go. Mrs. Mawlyn is quite disturbed over her gown for to-night."

"There! What did I tell you?" cried the colonel.

"And you've been helping her," I returned. "I'm right, am I not? You're a saint, Miss Munt."

"Ah! But I couldn't let her worry so," said the little old maid simply. "Besides, she must be frightfully trying for poor Mr. Mawlyn, when she's in a state of nerves." And she hurried away.

The colonel touched my elbow.

"Isn't she too lovely for words?" he said gently.

I looked up as Maude, Countess of Baylesford, passed us. A tall, dark, queenly woman.

"There," exclaimed the colonel, "is what I call a real English beauty. I shall never forget her when a young girl, being presented to his majesty, and, later, after her marriage, when she wore at the opera her famous pearls. She has always been celebrated for her jewels, I believe."

"By Jove!" I exclaimed. "It's clearing up," glancing at the big window framing the vistas of mountains from which the dense banks of white mist were rapidly lifting. "Let's get out for a breath of air."

I did not relish even temporarily giving up my comfortable suite of rooms, any more than did three or four other bachelors, but the force of circumstances was such, owing to the unheralded arrival for the ball of several prominent personages—among them several ladies—and the dilemma of the proprietor, whom we all liked, that we graciously assented. The result was that I found myself moved for the night from the second floor to a single room on the fourth floor, number eighty-three, diagonally opposite number ninety-two, the suite of the Countess of Baylesford, and within a few doors of number ninety-four, the Mawlyns' room. The colonel and I having taken a brisk walk, I was late in dressing for dinner.

I had just finished dressing and turned out my electric light, when I detected the sound of a muffled groan across the hall. I opened my door and stood listening intently, noting first that the countess' door was closed, the light from the transom over it streaming across the otherwise dimly lighted corridor. A few doors beyond I saw that the Mawlyns' room was dark, and their door ajar. There was no mistaking now where the groaning came from. I strode across the broad corridor and rapped at Mawlyn's door.

"Mawlyn," I ventured, "can I do anything for you? May I come in?"

"Yes—come—come in—" he labored in reply. "Here's the light—here by the bed."

I turned the electric button, illuminating a single room in disorder. A tray with the remainder of a luncheon still occupied the top of a trunk. Mawlyn lay on his side, with his face toward me, in the double bed, groaning. Flung about were most of Mrs. Mawlyn's clothes.

"For God's sake!" he gasped, after a moment, "I can't stand this." Painfully he tugged out from beneath the covers a hot-water bag.

"Get it filled, will you?" he begged savagely. "I want it hot—*hot*, understand?" he half whimpered, and I saw come into his eyes that hysterical,

frantic look which accute pain **worries** a man into.

Though the electric-bell button was within his reach, I knew he had rung it in vain for a servant. I went to the bathroom across the corridor—where I filled the bag at the hot-water faucet—returned, and got him comfortable with the bag as hot as he could stand it against his hip.

"Thank you," he breathed, gritting his teeth in an endeavor to turn over on his back, caught his breath in a fresh spasm of pain, and prudently lay still.

Incensed as I was at Mrs. Mawlyn for abandoning him, knowing that she was downstairs dining with that cad, Cyril Reeves, I held my temper and tried to cheer Mawlyn up a little before leaving him, but he would have none of it, and begged me to leave him directly and go down to dinner—insisting that there was positively nothing more I could do, and that he already felt easier. This, I saw, was the truth, for the intense heat had already had its calming effect, and his eyes had grown drowsy.

"I believe I can sleep," he murmured, and, fearing to rouse him by further talk, I put out the light at his request, and, leaving him, gently closed the door behind me.

As I did so, I thought I distinctly heard through the transom above me the crisp rustle of a silk gown—and was more than half convinced the sound came from the room I had just left. Had Mrs. Mawlyn been in the room during my visit? Impossible, I said to myself, and, dismissing the incident of the rustling silk from my mind, I descended the stairs to dinner.

Barely had I reached the ground floor when I suddenly remembered leaving my dispatch box unlocked in my room, with some letters of a purely personal nature in it, and, knowing the inquisitiveness of hotel servants, I leaped back up the stairs again to the fourth floor, and retraced my way toward my room down the dimly lighted corridor. Not a guest or a servant was in sight. The former, all save poor Mawlyn, I knew were by now at dinner, and the servants

still gaping, as I had left them a moment ago downstairs, at the final touches to the decorations of the ballroom.

I stopped as I passed what I thought was Mawlyn's door to listen, and, finding it again, to my surprise, ajar, and the light out, stood straining my ears on the threshold to make sure he was asleep. If he was not, I intended again to enter and be, if possible, of some service to him. I kept motionless, listening—no sound—then my ears were startled by a faint click within the room. That unmistakable dry click of the cocking of a revolver. Instantly Mrs. Mawlyn flashed across my mind, for I fully believed that beast of a wife of his capable of shooting him in his sleep, and charging him with suicide. Even that—to obtain her freedom from an invalid, and, as a natural sequence, marry Cyril Reeves.

I hesitated no longer. I stepped across the threshold in the dark, determined to thrust my presence in, as a block, if possible, to a crime. Vainly I groped for the electric-light button by his bedside I had just turned on and off a few moments ago. It was not there.

Was I in the wrong room? Three steps more in the dark ran me against the corner of a wall and a heavy curtain. Instinctively I reached out, confused in the dark, and parted the portière.

There, not ten paces beyond me, in the light from the half-open door of a *cabinet de toilette*, stood the figure of a man in a gray bath robe, with his back to me, bending over a green leather jewel case, open upon a woman's dressing table.

So amazed and engrossed was I in watching him, that it did not even then occur to me that I was in the Countess of Baylesford's bedroom. I saw him empty the contents of two flat drawers and lift out from beneath them a long, glittering string of diamonds, which he slipped into the pocket of his bath robe.

The figure turned.

To my stupefaction, it was Mawlyn! Before I had time to speak or move,

I heard the door I had entered closed at my back—I wheeled, and in that brief second I recognized before me, half crouching in the half light—silent, devilish, and terrible—Cyril Reeves.

The next instant he dealt me a blow with his fist that sent me reeling to my knees—his hands closed on my throat, and he had me down.

"Finish him," said Mawlyn coolly, standing by and surveying us.

In my frenzy to free myself from the strangling grip of my assailant, I managed for a second to part his hands from my throat, and shouted with all my might. Shouted for my life. He was upon me again like a flash—silent—skillful, terrible. Again, for a moment, I felt I had the advantage of him. I had freed my throat again, and gotten a breaking leverage upon his left arm.

Then Mawlyn knocked me on the head with the butt of his revolver. The floor seemed to open beneath me, black and fathomless, and I knew no more, save the sensation of dropping, dropping, dropping.

When I awoke the colonel and the archduke were by my bedside, and the proprietor and a physician were just leaving.

"He'll be all right by to-morrow," I heard the physician say.

The door opened, and Miss Munt entered, closed it, and, at a sign from the archduke, slipped the inside bolt to further intruders.

But for a sense of weakness and a dull ache at the back of my neck, I was none the worse. I was the first to speak, for, despite what had happened, I was, I confess, bewildered at their total change of manner.

The colonel held up his hand.

"You have had enough, my friend," he said, in an even, businesslike voice. "We'll do the talking."

The drawl in his English accent had vanished as completely as the broken English of the archduke, who added, laying his big hands on his knees:

"We have no intention of tiring you. There are some details, however, which we wish to make clear."

I lay there gazing, first at the archduke, then at the colonel and Miss Munt, in astonishment, not quite sure whether I was awake or not, or in full possession of my mind.

"You are not dressed for the ball," I ventured vaguely, noting all three were in their traveling clothes.

"The ball was over this morning," smiled the colonel, glancing at his watch. "We have been somewhat occupied since then. Come!" he exclaimed. "It is only fair to you that we should enlighten you briefly as to the truth of what you have been so innocent and unfortunate a witness to. First, you must know that Mr. Gaines here," nodding to the archduke, "is more celebrated in protecting celebrities than being one himself."

"No more so than you are, Crowell," laughed grimly the big fellow at his side. "Or Miss McLeod," he added, chucking up his fat chin knowingly at the little old maid.

"You had better wire Tomlin, also, to headquarters, Miss McLeod," interposed Crowell.

"Very good, sir," and she sat down at my open desk.

"Secondly," proceeded Crowell, "the one whom we hoped to lay our hands on during the days we have been together has eluded us, since, contrary to our judgment, he did not put in an appearance. He is worth having, being the brains and leader of as clever a gang of international hotel thieves as exist. The 'Mawlyns' were, among others, working

for him, but neither the woman nor Mawlyn have had Reeves'—better known as 'Dandy Ryan's' record or experience. He is older than he looks. All three, I am glad to say, are now on their way to London in charge of our people from Scotland Yard. As for the Countess of Baylesford's jewels, they are again in that lady's possession."

For a moment I was too much astonished to speak. Then the reality of it all dawned upon me. All I could say to these able detectives was that I was grateful to them for my life.

"You saved that yourself, sir," put in Gaines. "The cry you gave was heard by a passing housemaid, reported at the desk, and we notified. There was not a shadow of a doubt as to who were your assailants. We arrested Mawlyn in his bed—'unable to move,' naturally," smiled Gaines, "until we 'moved' him. His guilt was, of course, undeniable. You remember the little incident the night before the ball, when he fished for the bit of cork? It is just as well to have the finger prints of such swine as he when you can get them. The Bertillon system has been a godsend to us in our profession. The woman and Reeves we arrested downstairs."

"If you don't mind," interrupted Miss McLeod briskly, "I'll ring for a cup of tea. I always have a raging headache after a hotel case is over. What time is our train, Mr. Gaines?" And she laid her active finger on the electric button.



PLAYS AND PLAYERS

A FIRST NIGHTER

THE romance-play revival, recently prophesied in these pages, has come about, and the New York public has proved itself akin in natural tastes to all other publics. It has devoured romance with the avidity of an ingenuous heart. No little one-night stand on the susceptible Southern circuit ever rose more completely to the charm of powder and patches and "Stand and deliver!" and "Behold the king!" et cetera, than did New York when Annie Russell cozened forth the ladies of Sheridan and Shakespeare and Goldsmith, and set their voluminous silken ruffles to rustling and whispering old spells from the past upon the stage of the Thirty-ninth Street Theatre.

Miss Russell opened her nine weeks' season of old English comedies with "She Stoops to Conquer," and played it to packed houses for a fortnight. Miss Russell is much more than a "star." She is an artist; she has an eye to the ensemble. She is a star with the same generosity and common sense that govern Mrs. Fiske, John Kellard, Walker Whiteside, John Mason, Lewis Waller, and William Faversham. These stars know that every good actor appears to better advantage in his own rôle if he has good support. Miss Russell supplied herself with the best support to be had. In ensemble and individual excellence, her cast was noteworthy—indeed, remarkable.

The details of the productions were worked out by Miss Russell and Oswald Yorke, and Mr. Yorke directed the players. For the first time, we really learned what talents and what technical equipment this dainty comedienne possesses. This was Annie Russell's real début. We have not known her heretofore.

Miss Russell played *Kate Hardcastle*, of course, and oh, what fine reading of fine lines! What sparkle and mercurial play of feature and voice, what variety of method, what deftness and polish! It was the best of the best English method. This writer will not soon forget her captivating comedy in the scenes with young *Marlow*—Frank Reicher; nor the delicacy with which she pointed it. Pepys would have made a note in his diary on her reading of the line: "The man is very well for a man." Her costumes and her coiffure must come in for their share of praise. With her grace of movement, and the joyous lightness of her step, they assisted in creating a faultless portrait of that lovely and lovable Maid Mischief, *Kate Hardcastle*.

In last month's AINSLEE'S we had space only for a general consideration of certain plays in connection with the revival of romance on the American stage. This month, owing to the few important productions that have been made in the interim, we have space to consider *acting* as a special factor in this revival; for acting is an art as

rare, distinguished, and separate as play writing, and as potent in the stimulation of the audience's imagination. Without the subtle charms and graces, the inspirational touches, the vivid, mercurial intelligence of the "romantic actor"—so called because he can wear any century's costume with the perfect manner of its day—the finest plays this season has to offer to the public could not have been staged. Such acting as we consider here has a very large influence in the normal trend of our theater toward its own former high mark—to what it was in the days of Daly's, Palmer's, The Frohman Empire Stock, the days of Modjeska and Booth and Barrett, McCullough, Mary Anderson, Ada Rehan, Joseph Jefferson, and, more lately, Mansfield; the Mansfield of his younger days, while the general theater still approximated to him, before it had utterly receded and left him solitary as Liberty and the Lamp on his little art island.

So let us to a review of the delicious acting in "She Stoops to Conquer." Young Marlow is not a grateful part for an actor. He is every one's fool throughout the play, and, in his scenes with Kate, he is little else than a butt for her merciless mirth. Mr. Reicher's chief achievement was in his make-up, both in physical portraiture and in what it suggested of type, station, and individual character. The nose appeared slender, sharply straight, and long, of the pronounced English type seen much among "gentlemen and scholars." The nostrils were thinned and arched, to indicate that proud, aristocratic, oversensitive character of gentry made known to us in old paintings of the "quality." This touch at the nostrils was also the keynote of the rôle, as Mr. Reicher played it. Thus he tempered the egotism of Marlow by translating it into sensitiveness. He gave him the rights of a human being, despite the mockery and mirth of the other characters, yet—and this is important—never lost a comedy point.

George Giddens, as *Tony Lumpkin*, justified his English fame in the rôle. His was a performance mellow and

rich in unction, deep as the bubbling springs of pure comedy, and as human as any man you ever jogged elbows with at the county fair. He gave out, in sympathetic measure, the large, clumsy, Newfoundland-puppy frolicsomeness and the obvious and ingenuous self-conceit of the young squire. And every point in character drawing and in reading was inspired by pure humor. The whole performance was genial, fun-loving, and grounded in a deep, tolerant comprehension of the man the author drew.

We had heard much of George Giddens and his *Tony*; his name is noted in the part in the "tight little island of Britain." Those who had seen his *Admiral*, in "Pomander Walk," were expecting much, whether they had heard of his *Tony* or not. No one was disappointed, for Mr. Giddens lived up to all the announcements made in his name, not only as *Tony*, but in the rôle of *Dogberry*, in "Much Ado About Nothing."

Of Fred Permain, we had not heard much. In these days of excessive advertising, we are not prepared for such artistry in any player unless he is featured and trumpeted in advance; though it is very few of those who are so heralded who justify it histrionically! Mr. Permain's *Hardcastle* was one of the richest treats in this excellent cast. Besides an impeccable technique, he has native talent of a high order, and the power of conviction in an unusual degree. His *Hardcastle* was a perfectly delineated character, simple and benign, without loss of largeness; dignified on occasion, with all the man's majesty of an English autocrat of the home, of *Hardcastle's* class and period, and, withal, possessing the needed touch of the country gentleman, the squire, as opposed to the gentleman of the town. It was as fine and complete a piece of portraiture as ever was executed with brush and canvas to add to the fame of a Romney or a Reynolds.

Mr. Permain's splendid picture of *Hardcastle* did not record him a one-part actor, however. He appeared in "Much Ado About Nothing" as Leo-

nato, and, within the limits of the rôle, gave a performance as excellent.

It seems odd that an actress with Miss Russell's rather exceptional grasp of the technique of the player's art should imagine that a brilliant mimic and platform reader must make a good *Mrs. Hardcastle*. That she was in error in her deductions was evident in Beatrice Herford's performance of this rôle, which is one of the richest in character comedy. It is a Florine Arnold part, if ever there was one, and the actress who played such a brilliant *Miss Crawley* in "Becky Sharp" would have made the scenes between *Tony* and his doting mother do what the author intended they should do in his play. Miss Herford was a reader without her platform, and a mimic with no one to imitate, and failed to be either the rôle or amusing. This was not her fault. She is not an actress. Only an actress can present a character in a play so that it becomes a living personality to the spectator. The art of acting is an art. It is no hit-or-miss affair, any more than violin playing.

Some one was quarreling with the writer's enthusiasms for Miss Russell's company and their performance of the Goldsmith comedy, on the ground that all the important rôles were in the hands of English players. Now, no one could have less patience than the writer with the wholesale importation of English actors—and of English and foreign plays, for the American playwright is fully as badly used in this matter as the American player. But art is not national—it is universal; and, wherever it appears, must be honestly praised as art, irrespective of personality or nationality, politics or creed; art is first, above all four. It makes only one answer to jealousy: "Do better yourself."

In Miss Russell's company were several American players; one of them has played a number of important rôles on Broadway. They did not measure up to the standard of the plays, because they have not had the classical training. They have not had the grounding in their art that the English actors have

received, and so when they appear in the big plays of the classical periods, they cannot, colloquially speaking, "deliver the goods." Herein lies the superiority of the good English actor over the American actor, particularly of the younger generation. It is sad, but it is a fact; jealousy on either personal or national grounds will not alter it.

When the theater in this country ceased to be in the hands of actor-managers, and came under the control of mere business men, who knew nothing of the dramatic art, and cared nothing for it except as a commercial factor, the classics were banished because the scenery is plentiful and expensive, and because, according to a rule of the profession, the management must provide all costumes in costume plays; whereas in modern plays the players must buy their own. There is the whole reason why Shakespeare ceased from the New York theaters. Thus the actor was deprived of the opportunity for adequate education in his art, which only the classics offer. No man or woman trained on petty stuff ever became a great artist. The dramas of Fitch and Thomas *et al* will give no profound and imaginative players to our stage. Divorced from depth and imagination, acting loses the romantic touch, and ceases to be an art. The question is, will we learn our lesson from the English artists and restore the classics to their place on our stage, once more accepting them as the final test of the actor? The question begins to be answered in the affirmative—with Faversham's production of "Julius Cæsar," Miss Russell's old English comedies, and John Kellard's three months of Shakespearean repertoire at the Garden Theater. This will surely mean a return of the day of great acting on the American stage.

In this connection, it is interesting to consider those remarks of Walker Whiteside's, made in an interview with the writer, in regard to a recent attempt to establish a civic art theater.

"They have begun wrong," he said. "They cannot found an art theater and leave Shakespeare out. There is not

one of his plays announced in their repertoire. He is the foundation. Without him, no enduring structure can be built; there can be no great acting. Acting means the possession of a vivid and spiritually quickened imagination which can compass the emotional conflict embodied in a great rôle, and reflect it, radiate it, to the understanding and heart of the audience; and in such a manner that the carefully pictured outward appearance of the character—be it Japanese of to-day or French of yesterday, or of what nation or day you will—sinks into the servant's place that belongs to it, and becomes merely an exquisitely tinted window through which the spectator views universal human experience. This spiritual quickening of the player's imagination can come only from the contemplation of Beauty, and from the constant study and voicing and personification of true things, profound things, nobly translated into human feeling, and beautifully expressed. Indeed, his voice itself he owes to these things. No player could grow a voice, let alone a soul, on the lines of most of the modern English and American plays! Without my experience in Shakespeare, I could not attempt to play *Tokeramo* in the "Typhoon" as I have conceived him; that is, a tragic, strange, but not unlovely or ignoble atom of human dust seen through a yellow glass; a tragic atom from the primal days, with a hint of archaic grandeur in his spiritual loneliness, forbidden—by his racial stoicism—all the variety of voice and facial expression and gesture which makes other rôles easy in comparison. The classics are the actor's training school. *No classics, no actors!*"

The truth of this dictum is seen vividly in the work of Frank Reicher, whose *Benedick* in "Much Ado" is one of the big things of the season. Mr. Reicher is the son of one of the leading actors in Germany. Indeed, Emmanuel Reicher is more than a noted actor—he is one of the most important producers, a man who has done much for the progress and ennoblement of the modern German theater. Frank Reicher's

mother, Reicher-Kindermann, was a famous and a great singer. The young German actor came to America twelve years ago from the highest quality of artistic environment in Europe, bringing the best that Europe had taught him. In America he has learned a faultless English—most *American* players might well emulate him in this!—besides undergoing a variety of theatrical experiences that have rounded him out as an American artist. For several seasons he played important rôles with Sothern. He has been in vaudeville; in pantomime and dancing; with Mrs. Fiske and other stars; and producing director for Henry B. Harris.

By an accident, he was discovered to us as a remarkable actor. Mr. Harris had that fine work of Percy Mackaye's, "The Scarecrow," on his hands. He wanted to produce it, but could not find an actor equal to the title rôle. Not in confidence, but in despair, he gave it to Mr. Reicher. After the first performance, we knew that the day star stood once more above our theater, announcing the coming of an artist among us. This was abundantly confirmed last spring when Mr. Reicher played that philosophical, brilliantly unstable vagabond, *Ferrand*, in "The Pigeon." So that it was with the keenest expectations that we looked forward to his *Benedick* in "Much Ado," expectations that have been fully satisfied.

Possessed of a handsome and expressive person, a voice that is flexible, rich, and musical, and a splendid technique, Mr. Reicher gave us Shakespeare's *Benedick*. In the earlier scenes of the play, he was all swashbuckling soldier, flesh-tired from fighting, slow and swagger-footed, the man who never walks if he can avoid it, but lives much on his horse's back, and is far more at home there than in the company of either elderly princes or young ladies. It was *Benedick*, the sturdy warrior, devotee of the swift fight, the broad jest, and the long drink, with all the complacency of vigorous body and sound muscle—which nothing less than the waspish tongue and lightning-thrust wit of *Beatrice* could penetrate. Thanks

to the art of the actor, we knew *Benedick* instantly to be all of this; our interest was caught and our imagination stimulated. We were prepared for the transitions into the lover, the knight, the avenger, and the unconscious comedian, from the first moment, when we saw how *Beatrice* could play upon him.

Scenes in which Mr. Reicher was especially fine were the challenge to *Claudio* and the scene with *Beatrice* in the church after *Claudio's* accusation against *Hero*. The challenge was delivered with trenchant potency and the dignity of the unmannered soldier who honors the cause for which he fights above all other considerations. The scene with *Beatrice* was a beautiful thing to see and to remember. It was the soldier turned Galahad, through love—or crusader; accepting *Beatrice's* conviction of *Hero's* innocence as his own chief faith, and going forth to fight blindly and sacredly wherever love commanded, even with his friend. The profound finality of his: "Enough! I am engaged;" the lover's kiss upon her hand; then the dropping upon one knee and the lifting of the crossed hilt of his sword toward her in consecration—these were beautiful and imaginative touches, done with breadth as well as grace, and in no wise detracting from the sturdy masculinity of the character. In fact, the translation, under love, of a swaggering physical force into a finer potency was one of the most important psychological points in Mr. Reicher's characterization; and, while achieving these serious and stately things in the character, he forfeited not one whit of the humor. We had our times of rollicking with mirth at him!

Mrs. Fiske has another success from the pen of Edward Sheldon. It is called "The High Road," and deals with

twenty-seven years of a woman's life, beginning when she is seventeen, and is lured from the old farm by an artist sort of person. Mrs. Fiske has one of her most successful rôles as *Mary Page*, the girl who is lured and who later leaves her lurer—"alliteration's artful aid"—to labor in a shirt-waist factory; thence to lobbying at Albany, and finally to a marriage with the governor, despite her far-away past. When he hesitates for a moment after her confession, she calls to him—as only Mrs. Fiske can: "Don't disappoint me!" The governor lives up to her expectation, and takes her in his arms. The play contains a very interesting idea, and Mr. Sheldon's treatment of it is modern and original, but not profound.

Madame Simone, in "The Paper Chase," a romantic comedy by Louis Napoleon Parker, opened at Wallack's successfully. The day of the romance play is certainly here. People have flocked to see the French actress, the costumes, the lively incidents and intrigues of Mr. Parker's dainty, sprightly, unsubtle little play. The piece is charmingly mounted, and is a most pleasing entertainment.

If we appear lacking in enthusiasm for the latest works of Mr. Parker and Mr. Sheldon it is because the classics train not only actors, but spectators and critics. After the richness, variety, mellowness, profound humanness, charm, and wit of the old English comedies, performed by such an exceptional cast, and mounted and costumed with marvelous beauty and no less marvelous *extravagance*, the rest of New York's dramatic fare seems thin pickings to those whose appetites have been glutted with the opulent mirth and beauty of the fat writers of other centuries!





Maurice Hewlett's gift of visualizing and presenting the atmosphere of the period he selects for his stories has never been used to such effect as he has used it in his new book, "Mrs. Lancelot," published by the Century Company. Moreover, his phrase making, or, to put it more bluntly, his word catching, now and then forces from the reader a reluctant tribute to his skill. His characters, also, three men and a woman, are masterpieces, really vital early Victorians. They are drawn to the life, life with a gloss and burnish over it—almost a varnish.

The wonder of a quite impossible tale of impossible, but perfectly logical, assumptions is that Mr. Hewlett never loses the reader's sympathy for the frail and lovely Georgiana. But though he cunningly emphasizes the graces of the latkadaisical heroine, the conviction is constantly forced upon the reader that Georgiana was a fool, much beloved, and much admired, but, none the less, a fool; otherwise she would never have permitted so many assumptions to be made about her. Neither would she so supinely have married Charles Lancelot, nor, after having been associated for many years with the greatest man in English public life, the Duke of Devizes, would she have eloped with a hot-headed young poet.

It is after one is deep in the last chapters that he becomes aware of a sense of disappointment which increases steadily until the final page is reached.

The author has conceived a certain dénouement, admirable enough in itself, but one which is the last his characters, if left to themselves, would develop.

So his wonderful characterization is ruthlessly abandoned, and the people we have grown to know become suddenly capricious and disappointing.



It is only Mr. James Lane Allen's sense of proportion and sense of humor that save him from eighteenth-century sentimentality in his new book, "The Heroine in Bronze," published by the Macmillan Company. The book is beautifully written, of course; clear, pell-mell, and—cloyingly sweet, like honey.

The scene is laid in New York, and at the present time. The story is told in the first person, detailing the experiences of a young novelist who, leaving his home in Kentucky, has come to the city bringing his hopes and ideals, not to mention his manuscripts. The heroine is high-born, a daughter of wealth and position; her splendid home, in the heart of New York, is surrounded by spacious gardens—a fact which must give the real-estate operator many sleepless nights. She is a creature of transcendent beauty and rare qualities of mind and heart, though, to tell the truth, we would be secretly convinced that she was a young woman given to driving a hard bargain, if we had not Mr. Allen's assurance to the contrary.

The character given her by the author is, however, necessary to the exigencies of the tale in order that it may be drawn out to the required length.

The plot, as plots go nowadays, is not worth consideration. It is simply the story of the misunderstandings of two young people deeply in love with each other, who finally make the explanations

that could just as easily have been made at the outset, but it is all told with a charm and finish which even mannerisms and carefully studied effects of style cannot dull.



Louise Closser Hale has achieved a rather remarkable piece of work in her new book, "Her Soul and Her Body," published by Moffat, Yard & Co.

It is not a great novel, it makes no pretensions to anything so impressive; but in its strict fidelity to the conditions and characters which the author attempts to depict, it is astonishingly true.

Melissa Robinson, the heroine, also known as "Missy," is a young, unsophisticated girl, who goes to Boston to study dancing, and because her guardians in the country town which she has left are as ignorant of the world as she is, she finds herself, in the city, if not exactly among thieves, at any rate environed by the sordid and dingy half-world into which her limited means have forced her.

She is a charming, little figure, and, considering her temperament and ignorance, it is inevitable that she should fall under the influence of a man who captures first her imagination, and then her heart. He is good looking and rich, but just misses being a gentleman.

Mrs. Hale's art discloses itself in the unfolding of the story. She never falters in her realism, never mitigates conditions, and yet is clear-sighted enough to see always a redeeming quality in ugly facts; because of Missy's youth and joy of life, she is untainted by circumstance. She has everything to drag her down in the world; she is without guidance or even advice; her companions are young girls as friendless and as easily tempted as she is, and women it is a misfortune to know, and yet, through sheer force of character, and an innate appreciation of life's true values, she finds freedom and success in her work.



"The Place of Honeymoons" is the title of a new book by Harold Mac-

Grath, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company.

Whether it is a romance, a melodrama, or an adventure story, it is hard to tell, for, as a matter of fact, the story is a combination of all three. Its classification is not of much importance anyway; that it is a story likely to interest, and entertain a large circle of readers is sufficient.

Nora Harrigan is the daughter of a retired hero of the prize ring, but that is not the name under which she is known to the patrons of the Metropolitan and Paris opera houses. She appears in both of these palaces of song as Eleanora da Toscana. Edward Courtlandt is a blue-blooded New Yorker, and a victim of the now familiar "*wanderlust*." "He became known in every port of call," and had done many things in many parts of the world. Among others, he had met Nora in India, and had subsequently married her.

But a mischief-making operatic rival of Nora's, known as the Calabrian, had separated the lovers immediately after the wedding ceremony. The bride left her husband, in indignation and contempt, and then followed a long pursuit of her by him in order to effect a reconciliation.

This pursuit constitutes the plot of the tale. Most of the action takes place in Paris, and the narrative tells how Courtlandt's efforts to recover his wife are defeated with a regularity that would discourage and disgust almost any other man.

The book is full of incident bearing on this motive, and crowded with characters, all of whom have a hand, consciously or unconsciously, in Courtlandt's disappointments.

The story is attractively told in Mr. MacGrath's familiar, easy style, and is as well worth reading as any of its predecessors.



Frank Clamart, alias "Wall Street Frank," alias "His Lordship," alias "The Tide-Water Clam," alias "The Swell," is the hero of Henry C. Row-

land's new book, "The Closing Net," published by Dodd, Mead & Co.

As he himself says, Frank is a gentleman crook, the most dangerous variety. His father's family "was about the best in the United States," barring only his mother's. His parents were both thoroughbreds—only they were never married, and to this little oversight of theirs Frank attributes his career as a successful and artistic crook.

If the chronicle is a truthful one, we must accept the "Tide-Water Clam" not only as a leader of his profession, but as a man who lives up to his inheritance as a man of thoroughbred parentage. He prides himself particularly on the fact that whenever he makes a promise, he never breaks it, and in this account which he gives, he certainly substantiates his claim.

He falls in with an organization of high-class crooks in Paris, and, in order to make a demonstration of American methods for his French friends, he undertakes a burglary which would have been a triumph had not a feminine accomplice insisted upon sharing the excitement with him. The result of this adventure brings him into contact with his half-brother and the latter's wife, and to her he makes a promise to reform.

It is his steadfastness in keeping this promise that makes trouble for him, and material for the story, for it involves him immediately in a contest with the criminal society already mentioned, a contest which develops into a matter of life and death for him.

All of this takes place in Paris. In the course of his war with the French crooks, he encounters a French countess, who, having become reduced in circumstances, has adopted the rôle of driver of a Parisian taxicab. After he has secured her friendship, she confides to him that she is from Wichita, Kansas.

The story is original and exciting enough to keep the reader constantly absorbed, and is reasonably well told.



Important New Books.

- "The Upas Tree," Florence L. Barclay, G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- "The Honourable Mrs. Garry," Mrs. Henry de la Pasture, E. P. Dutton & Co.
- "The Going of the White Swan," Gilbert Parker, D. Appleton & Co.
- "Blue Bird Weather," Robert W. Chambers, D. Appleton & Co.
- "The Financier," Theodore Dreiser, Harper & Bros.
- "The First Hurdle," John Reed Scott, J. B. Lippincott Co.
- "Linda," Margaret Prescott Montague, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
- "One Man's Views," Leonard Merrick, Mitchell Kennerley.
- "Meadowsweet," Baroness Orczy, George H. Doran & Co.
- "Beauty and the Jacobin," Booth Tarkington, Harper & Bros.
- "The Midlanders," Charles Tenney Jackson, Bobbs-Merrill Co.
- "The Strong Hand," Warwick Deeping, Cassell & Co.
- "The Adventures of Kitty Cobb," James Montgomery Flagg, George H. Doran Co.
- "The Royal Road," Alfred Ollivant, Doubleday, Page & Co.
- "Jelf's," Horace Annesley Vachell, George H. Doran Co.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

THIS is our birthday number. AINSLEE'S is fifteen years old. Not a great many years, to be sure, but even in our short lifetime we have seen many important changes in the world of fiction. Old magazines have gone; new magazines have come; one or two magazines have both come and gone. Fourteen years ago Bret Harte was contributing to AINSLEE'S. When he was lost to us we felt that his place as a writer of short stories could never be filled. Just as we were becoming sure of it we found O. Henry; and then, a little later—he did it all in ten years—the whole world lost him. Who will it be in the next fifteen years? Of this much only are we sure: It will not be "the American de Maupassant"; it will not be any one who has "stepped into the shoes of Bret Harte," nor will it be some one "upon whom the mantle of O. Henry has fallen." The great short-story writer of the future, like those of the past, will speak his own language and wear his own clothes.



WE have always believed that in many respects a manuscript has to be of greater merit to find acceptance with a popular magazine than with a book publisher. A book narrative may begin where its author pleases, and, because it is a book, the reader will persevere until he gets really into it. A magazine story, on the other hand, must begin at the beginning—not several pages or chapters before the beginning. There are too many other stories, too many other magazines, ready to claim the reader's attention the moment it flags. This is no recent development. It has always been so. A very distinguished magazine writer of the past put it thus:

"A man who publishes his works in a volume has an infinite advantage over one who communicates his writings to the world in loose tracts and single pieces. We do not expect to meet with anything in a bulky volume until after some heavy preamble, and several words, of course, to prepare the

reader for what follows. . . . On the contrary, those who publish their thoughts in distinct sheets, and, as it were, by piece-meal, have none of these advantages. We must immediately fall into our subject, and treat every part of it in a lively manner, or our papers are thrown by as dull and insipid; our matter must lie close together, and either be wholly new in itself, or in the turn it receives from our expression."

The above is quoted from a magazine that entertained two hundred years ago, *The Spectator*, and is attributed to Joseph Addison.



THE story we have selected for the complete novel in the March number admirably fulfills this magazine requirement of grasping the reader's attention at the very beginning, and holding it throughout. A brief extract from the opening chapter will explain its title:

"A towel was twisted turban fashion about her head, and a bright-colored kimono failed to hide the fact that there was nothing but a bathing dress beneath it.

"'Harmless!' she gurgled; then, with a sudden gravity, and a potential wagging of the head that jerked the turban over her eyes: 'Don't be fooled, Mrs. Adams; he's raving—stark, staring raving. But he's my pajama man, and I love him,' she ended abruptly.

"'You know him?' gasped Mrs. Adams.

"'No, but we can see him from our veranda, and he wears the loveliest pajamas—silk—she ticked the items off on the fingers of a brown little hand—"white and green, white and blue, blue and green, blue and a sort of orange—that's four pairs, and—'

That's the title of this fascinating novel—"The Pajama Man." Its author is Ralph Stock.



AMONG the short stories in the coming number are two by writers whose work has been attracting such wide attention in

other magazines that they should have been in AINSLEE'S before this.

Probably no writer better understands or more delightfully interprets the heart of a child than does Ethel Train. "The Star Child," in our March issue, possesses the same whimsical tenderness and delicate mingling of pathos and humor that give this author's book, "Son," its rare appeal.

No introduction to readers of AINSLEE'S could insure John Fleming Wilson a warmer welcome than "The Girl Who Never Grew Old." It's a story that proves afresh the truth of the old paradox: idealism is more real than realism.



IT will be good news to followers of F. Berkeley Smith's colorful French tales to know that his publishers have brought out a second volume made up for the most part of his contributions to AINSLEE'S. "The Street of the Two Friends" is its title. Mr. Smith's next story, "To Please Mother," will be printed in our March issue.

The same number will contain one of the strongest stories that Constance Skinner has given us, a story dealing with the problems arising in the life of a conventionally reared country girl, who is married to a brilliant young actor. "Her Rightful Place" is the name of it.

Prejudices were stronger a generation ago than they are to-day. The owner of one of the most widely read periodicals of our fathers' time was strongly averse to second marriages. As a consequence it was one of the editorial rules of his publication that it must print no fiction containing step-parents with amiable characteristics. Second marriages were bad; therefore stepmothers had to be cruel—at least in this very particular periodical. It is fortunate for the reading public that Helen Baker Parker lives in this more enlightened age. Otherwise a charming little story of hers, "His New Day," which you will find in the coming AINSLEE'S, might never have seen type. For the lonely boy who chooses a new mother—incidentally his father has already chosen her—is such an attractive little chap that no stepmother could possibly have the heart to be cruel to him, even to comply with cast-iron editorial rules.

The fourth adventure in Anna Alice Chapin's appealing series, "The Woman With a Past," is called "Renaissance."

The remainder of the fiction in this unusually attractive number will be made up from characteristic stories by such writers as May Futrelle, Horace Fish, Gerald Villiers-Stuart, Edgar Saltus, and Ada Woodruff Anderson.



WHY MAN OF TO-DAY IS ONLY 50 PER CENT. EFFICIENT

By WALTER GRIFFITH

If one were to form an opinion from the number of helpful, inspiring and informing articles one sees in the public press and magazines, the purpose of which is to increase our efficiency, he must believe that the entire American Nation is striving for such an end—

And this is so.

The American Man because the race is swifter every day; competition is keener and the stronger the man the greater his capacity to win. The stronger the man the stronger his will and brain, and the greater his ability to match wits and win. The greater his confidence in himself the greater the confidence of other people in him: the keener his wit and the clearer his brain.

The American Woman because she must be competent to rear and manage the family and home, and take all the thought and responsibility from the shoulders of the man whose present-day business burdens are all that he can carry.

Now what are we doing to secure that efficiency? Much mentally, some of us much physically, but what is the trouble?

We are not really efficient more than half the time. Half the time blue and worried—all the time nervous—some of the time really incapacitated by illness.

There is a reason for this—a practical reason, one that has been known to physicians for quite a period and will be known to the entire World ere long.

That reason is that the human system does not, and will not, rid itself of all the waste which it accumulates under our present mode of living. No matter how regular we are, the food we eat and the sedentary lives we live (even though we do get some exercise) make it impossible; just as impossible as it is for the grate of a stove to rid itself of clinkers.

And the waste does to us exactly what

the clinkers do to the stove; make the fire burn low and inefficiently until enough clinkers have accumulated, and then prevent its burning at all.

It has been our habit, after this waste has reduced our efficiency about 75 per cent., to drug ourselves; or after we have become 100 per cent. inefficient through illness, to still further attempt to rid ourselves of it in the same way—by drugging.

If a clock is not cleaned once in a while it clogs up and stops; the same way with an engine because of the residue which it, in itself, accumulates. To clean the clock, you would not put acid on the parts, though you could probably find one that would do the work, nor to clean the engine would you force a cleaner through it that would injure its parts; yet that is the process you employ when you drug the system to rid it of waste.

You would clean your clock and engine with a harmless cleanser that Nature has provided, and you can do exactly the same for yourself as I will demonstrate before I conclude.

The reason that a physician's first step in illness is to purge the system is that no medicine can take effect nor can the system work properly while the colon (large intestine) is clogged up. If the colon were not clogged up the chances are 10 to 1 that you would not have been ill at all.

It may take some time for the clogging process to reach the stage where it produces real illness but, no matter how long it takes, while it is going on the functions are not working so as to keep us up to "concert pitch." Our livers are sluggish, we are dull and heavy—slight or severe headaches, come on—our sleep does not rest us—in short, we are about 50 per cent. efficient.

And if this condition progresses to where real illness develops, it is impossible to tell what form that illness will take, because—

The blood is constantly circulating through the colon and, taking up by absorp-

tion the poisons in the waste which it contains, it distributes them throughout the system and weakens it so that we are subject to whatever disease is most prevalent.

The nature of the illness depends on our own little weaknesses and what we are the least able to resist.

These facts are all scientifically correct in every particular, and it has often surprised me that they are not more generally known and appreciated. All we have to do is to consider the treatment that we have received in illness to realize fully how it developed, and the methods used to remove it.

So you see that not only is accumulated waste directly and constantly pulling down our efficiency by making our blood poor and our intellect dull—our spirits low and our ambitions weak, but it is responsible through its weakening and infecting processes for a list of illnesses that if catalogued here would seem almost unbelievable.

It is the direct and immediate cause of that very expensive and dangerous complaint—appendicitis.

If we can successfully eliminate the waste all our functions work properly and in accord—there are no poisons being taken up by the blood, so it is pure and imparts strength to every part of the body instead of weakness—there is nothing to clog up the system and make us bilious, dull and nervously fearful.

With everything working in perfect accord and without obstruction, our brains are clear, our entire physical being is competent to respond quickly to every requirement, and we are 100 per cent. efficient.

Now this waste that I speak of cannot be thoroughly removed by drugs, but even if it could the effect of these drugs on the functions is very unnatural, and if continued becomes a periodical necessity.

Note the opinions on drugging of two most eminent physicians:

Prof. Alonzo Clark, M. D., of the New York College of Physicians and Surgeons, says: "All of our curative agents are poisons, and as a consequence, every dose diminishes the patient's vitality."

Prof. Joseph M. Smith, M. D., of the same school, says: "All medicines which enter the circulation poison the blood in the same manner as do the poisons that produce disease."

Now, the internal organism can be kept as sweet and pure and clean as the external and by the same natural, sane method—bathing. By the proper system warm water can be introduced so that the colon is perfectly cleansed and kept pure.

There is no violence in this process—it seems to be just as normal and natural as washing one's hands.

Physicians are taking it up more widely and generally every day, and it seems as though everyone should be informed thoroughly on a practice which, though so rational and simple, is revolutionary in its accomplishments.

This is rather a delicate subject to write of exhaustively in the public press, but Chas. A. Tyrrell, M. D., has prepared an interesting treatise on "Why Man of Today Is Only 50 per cent. Efficient," which treats the subject very exhaustively, and which he will send without cost to any one addressing him at 134 West 65th Street, New York, and mentioning that they have read this article in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE.

Personally, I am enthusiastic on Internal Bathing because I have seen what it has done in illness as well as in health, and I believe that every person who wishes to keep in as near a perfect condition as is humanly possible should at least be informed on this subject; he will also probably learn something about himself which he has never known through reading the little book to which I refer.



Heating lightens life's drama

Years ago when theatrical folks desired to bring out a play with stage settings natural and home-like, they put a stove or fireplace in the scene. Nowadays the stage scenes of modern domestic and business life include a real or papier-mache radiator. This recognition of up-to-dateness is due to the immense use of

**AMERICAN & IDEAL
RADIATORS AND BOILERS**

results produced by IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators — both in uniform room-comfort and lowering of the living expenses — account for this democracy of the modern radiator to which the theaters now testify by their use.

IDEAL Boilers and AMERICAN Radiators produce cleanest heating known — no ash-dust, soot or coal-gases in living rooms to corrupt the breathing air, damage the furnishings, and make woman's every-day life a constant warfare of burdensome work, as results from old-time ways of heating.

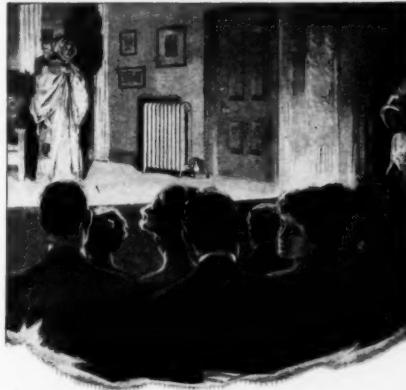


A No. 1-22-W IDEAL Boiler and 422 ft. of 38-in. AMERICAN Radiators, costing the owner \$210, were used to heat this cottage. At this price, the boiler was bought of any reputable, competent Fitter. This did not include costs of labor, pipe, valves, fittings, etc., which are extra, and vary according to climatic and other conditions.

Showrooms in all
large cities

AMERICAN RADIATOR COMPANY

Write Department 99
816-822 S. Michigan
Avenue, Chicago



now commonly found in cottages, town and country homes, city mansions and apartments, hotels, offices, banks, etc., etc., where they have become so necessary to well-rounded living and comfort. The

The lady in picture-foreground says to one of the party: "That's the heating we'll have when we build again." But, it is not necessary to wait—you can easily and quickly put an IDEAL Boiler and AMERICAN Radiators in your present home—without disturbing old heating equipment until ready to start fire in the new outfit. Thousands do it annually—enjoy real winter comfort—save fuel-money, and then get the original cost back should they later sell or rent.

Why not at once put ideal heating in the rooms of your every-day life drama? Write us (*to-day, lest you forget*). We will send (free): "Ideal Heating" book, which tells things on heat-making and heat-regulation which it will pay you big to know.

Write us also for catalogue of ARCO WAND Vacuum Cleaner, that sets in cellar and is connected by iron suction pipes to rooms above. It is the first genuinely practical machine put on the market, and will last as long as the building.



Each a Lucky Car

By R. E. Olds, Designer

In every make an occasional buyer gets a lucky car.

No repairs, no breaks, no troubles. Every part stands every strain.

In Reo the Fifth such things are not luck. I spend \$200 per car to insure them. And this is how I do it:

Making Sure

I know, in the first place, after 26 years spent in building cars, how much strength is needed.

To that needed strength I add 50 per cent. Each driving part, by actual test, is made ample for 45-horsepower. That leaves a big margin of safety.

To make sure of this strength I twice analyze every lot of steel.

I test my gears in a crushing machine of 50 tons' capacity.

I test my springs in another machine, for 100,000 vibrations.

Costly Extremes

In Reo the Fifth I use 190 drop forgings. Steel castings cost but half as much, but a casting often has a hidden flaw.

I use 15 roller bearings, Timken and Hyatt. The usual ball bearings cost one-fifth as much, but they often break.

I use a \$75 magneto to save ignition troubles.

I doubly heat my carburetor, to deal with low-grade gasoline.

A centrifugal pump is employed in this car to insure perfect circulation.

I use big tires to cut your tire expense. I have lately added 30 per cent to my tire cost to add 65 per cent to your tire mileage.

Endless Caution

Our factory process insures to each car almost a thousand inspections.

Every part is tested. Parts

are ground again and again, until we get utter exactness.

Each engine is tested 20 hours on blocks and 28 hours in the chassis. There are five long-continued tests.

And nothing is ever hurried. Our output is limited to 50 cars daily, so no man is ever rushed.

These things are expensive. They add to the necessary cost of this car about \$200, I figure.

But they save the user immensely more in repairs and upkeep.

So we save by factory efficiency, by building only one model, by making all our own parts. And we put that saving, for your sake, into these hidden parts.

Ideal Center Control

Reo the Fifth has a center control which you won't go without when you see it.

All the gear shifting is done by moving a handle only three inches in each of four directions. It is done with the right hand—not the left hand. And the handle is out of the way.

There are no levers, side or center—nothing in the way. The front is as clear as the tonneau. Both brakes are operated by foot pedals.

This arrangement permits of the left-side drive, to which the best cars are coming. The driver sits close to the

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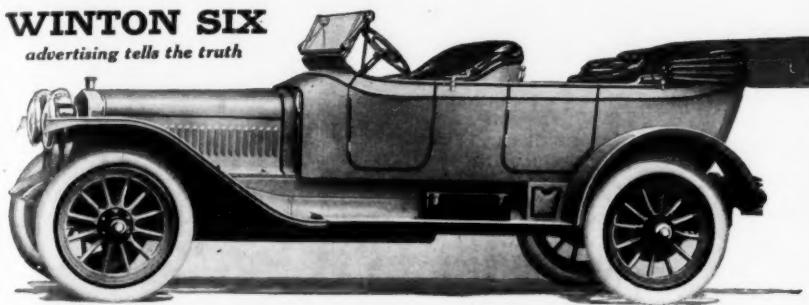
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1910	10	165,901.9	6.96
1909	10	118,503	127.30
1908	10	65,687.4	15.13
Totals	70	1,035,185.2	\$302.25

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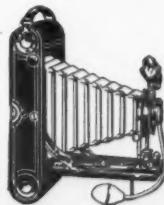
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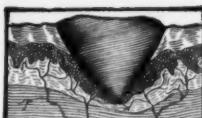
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That finishes that corn. A new corn may come if you pinch the toe, but the old one is ended forever.

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which contains no free caustic, and enjoy a cool, comfortable shave.

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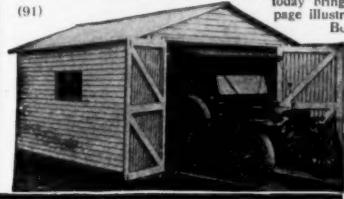
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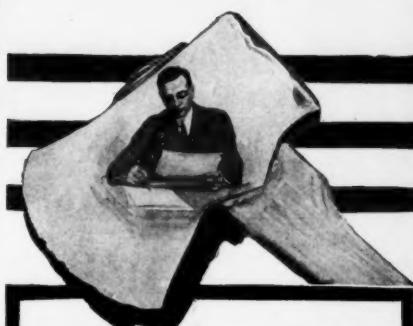
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Quickly Stained to a Beautiful
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Nothing gives a woman the appearance of age more surely than gray, streaked or faded hair. Just a touch now and then with Mrs. Potter's Walnut-Tint Hair Stain and presto! Youth has returned again.

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Awarded Gold Medal International Exposition, Rome, Grand Prix at Paris.
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It is the only application that can be painted on the skin above 140 degrees, at which point germ life dies.

Thermozone is a perfect dressing for an open wound because it destroys infection and makes an airtight covering that prevents the wound from injury while it stimulates the healing process.

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MOTHERSILL'S, after thorough tests, is now officially adopted by practically all the Great Lakes and New York Steamship Companies running south and many Transatlantic lines.

Four years ago Mr. Mothersill gave a personal demonstration of his remedy on the English Channel, Irish Sea and the Baltic, and received unqualified endorsement from leading papers and such people as Bishop Taylor Smith, Lord Northcliffe and hundreds of doctors, lawyers, professors and statesmen from persons of international repute—people we all know—together with much valuable information are contained in an attractive booklet, which will be sent free upon receipt of your name and address.

Motherstill's is guaranteed not to contain cocaine, morphine, opium, chloral, or any coal-tar products. 50c box is sufficient for twenty-four hours. \$1.00 box for a Transatlantic voyage. Your druggist keeps Motherstill's or will obtain it for you from his wholesaler. If you have any trouble getting the genuine, send direct to the Motherstill Remedy Co., 411 Scherer Bldg., Detroit, Mich. Also at 19 St. Bride St., London, Montreal, New York, Paris, Milan, Hamburg.



Deaf People Now

HEAR

**Distinctly!
Clearly!
Perfectly!**

*In The
Hollow of
Your Hand*

every kind of sound with the aid of the latest marvelous invention, the remarkable

New 4-Tone Mears Ear Phone

The great, new electrical marvel for the deaf. Perfect hearing at last! This remarkable invention has four different sound strengths, four different adjustments, instantly changed by a touch of the finger. You regulate the instrument by a tiny switch to meet any condition of your ear or to hear any sound—low pitched conversation near you or sounds from any distance. The whole range of hearing of the healthy, natural ear is covered by this new 4-Tone Special Model Mears Ear Phone.

Special Limited Offer

Write at once for our Big Special Introductory Offer on this new wonder. To advertise and quickly introduce this greatest of all inventions for the deaf, we are going to sell the first lot of these new **four-tone phones** **DIRECT** from our laboratory to users at the **confidential jobber's price**. This offer applies only to the first lot finished—a limited number. Write today—**now**—and you can save 50% off the regular price, half the retail price. A few dollars payable on easy terms, if desired, secures you complete relief from your affliction. **But the jobber's price is confidential.** You must write for it. Do it now and save both wholesaler's and retailer's profits.

**Try it 10 Days in
Your Own Home**

Every Mears Ear Phone is sold only on Free Trial. Ask about our great free trial offer. Test this amazing instrument on your own ears, under any conditions of service for ten days. Nothing to pay for the trial. The Mears Ear Phone is the only scientific and perfect hearing device for the deaf. Already 14,000 Single Tone Mears Ear Phones have been sold.

**Send Coupon Now
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The Mears Ear Phone book explains all the causes of deafness; tells how to stop the progress of the malady and how to treat it. Send the coupon at once for Free Book and our great Confidential Introductory Offer. Send at once.

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Gentlemen: Please
fill me, free and post-
age paid, your Mears Ear
Booklet and partic-
ularly your Special Intro-
ductory Offer on your new
one-Tone Mears Ear
Free Trial Offer.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements

Just One Moment, Please—

YOU remember with great pleasure, we dare say, the story by **ZANE GREY** in the POPULAR MAGAZINE, a year or so ago, entitled "The Heritage of the Desert." If you want a similar treat, begin reading "Desert Gold," by the same author, which opens in the next issue of the POPULAR, on sale February 7th.



FRANCIS LYNDE is responsible for the complete novel in that issue. It is entitled "Strange Adventures of Alpheus Substitute Mee, B. Sc.," and was written to delight the lover of strange seas, picturesque lands, and mysterious people.



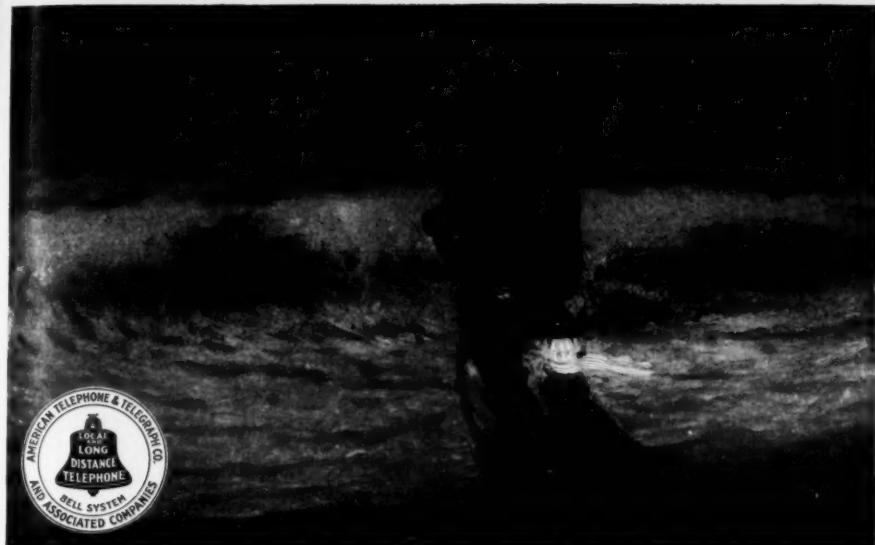
In addition, there are some rattling good short stories in that number—stories that you are sure to hear mentioned enthusiastically, and that you would have been sorry to miss. There is "A Man's Job," by **Bertrand W. Sinclair**, which brings blood into the cheek and fire into the eyes as you read it; there is "The Outcast," by **Francis Parsons**, a dramatic, stormy tale of tremendous odds overcome by one desperate man; there is "The Emerald Snake," by **Daniel Steele**, quite the best detective tale that the author has written in a long while; there is "Good Men and True," by **Courtney Ryley Cooper**, an old-time traveling circus yarn that will leave you chuckling; then there is humor predominant in "The Initial Event," by **James French Dorrance**; in "Getting Rid of Jud Tarr," by **Henry Oyen**; in "The Power of the Drama," by **Damon Runyon**.



But why continue to point out the fine things to be found between the covers of the coming POPULAR? Our "constant" reader knows our quality. Our "inconstant" reader will soon come to know it.

Tear off this as a reminder if you are an inconstant reader

Buy the First March POPULAR MAGAZINE, on sale at any news stand February 7th



Always on Guard

No matter where a ship may be along the American coast; no matter how dark, or cold, or stormy the night, the coast guard is on watch, patrolling the nearest beach or rocky cliffs.

This man, always on guard, could, by his own unsupported efforts, do little to save life, or to guide ships away from perilous points.

As a unit in an efficient system and able, at a moment's notice, to command the service of his nearby station, he becomes a power to whom all ship owners and passengers are indebted.

In the same way, the Bell Telephone in your home and office is always on guard.

By itself, it is only an ingenious instrument; but as a vital unit in the Bell System, which links together seven million other telephones in all parts of this country, that single telephone instrument becomes a power to help you at any moment of any hour, day or night.

It costs unwearying effort and millions of dollars to keep the Bell System always on guard, but this is the only kind of service that can adequately take care of the social and commercial needs of all the people of a Nation.

**AMERICAN TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY
AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

Every Bell Telephone is the Center of the System.

Weather Wisdom

To take the edge off
the weather and prevent it cutting,
biting or piercing you—to
keep your skin smooth,
clear, comfortable, and
healthy under all weather changes—use Pears'
Soap. As famed for its
protective influence over
the skin as for its complexion
beautifying effects

Pears' Soap

possesses those special emollient properties that act like balm upon the surface of the skin, and while making it soft and velvety to the touch, impart to it a healthy vigor that enables it to withstand the weather vagaries of our changeable climate.

*Pears is the Soap for all Weather and all People.
Matchless for the Complexion.*

The Great English
Complexion Soap

"All rights secured."

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

Please mention this magazine when answering advertisements.

"There's the stuff—

"Prince Albert's the bulliest tobacco I ever smoked in this old jimmy pipe—after breakfast or whenever!

"Just sort of rings the bell every time you make fire with a match—it's so fragrant and fresh—and with a flavor that makes you realize you've finally hit the high spot.

"And listen—you can't dig a tongue-bite from a barrel of P. A.—just isn't any—because it's cut out in the patented process that stamps P. A. my brand and *your* brand!

"Smoke P. A. till the cows come home! Smoke it any old way, it can't even dry your mouth or parch your throat! Get that?

"Your cue is to switch onto the map with a jimmy pipe and get some of this sure enough pipe joy.

"Doesn't listen right any more to sing out: 'I can't smoke a pipe.' You can, you will, if you catch the spirit of this hunch and go to it with the old jimmy jammed with P. A.

"Today, everywhere men go a pipe's triple x form. They smoke their favorites in the big cafes. Walk into the clubs and you'll find the old jimmies doing great service. In the homes, on the street, in the offices, just get a line on pipe smoking—and the men who smoke Prince Albert!

"Prince Albert has made all this possible, because it's the brand that's all wool and ace high. It puts the jimmy pipe right on the firing line with *you*, with me, with every man who knows the joys of the real way to smoke tobacco. Say, get into the spirit of

PRINCE ALBERT

the national joy smoke

Buy P. A. in the big cities, back in the bushes—in any neck of the woods you make camp. The tidy red tin 10c, the toppy red bag 5c, and also in handsome pound and half-pound humidors.

R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO.
Winston-Salem, N. C.



Says "Hunch:"

"They ain't nothin' so soothin' as the corn cob for me, but the chap up the road, he's got a pipe like the same pet bent bulldog with an amber stem for nine years flat. Set him down here, here's somethin' to set this real bear jimmy pine set-choked to the bone with P. A. An' he knows!"

FATIMA

TURKISH
BLEND
CIGARETTES

A Good Smoke for a Good Fellow! This exquisitely balanced Turkish-blend cigarette has enjoyable qualities all its own.

Never before has popularity in a cigarette, been so spontaneously shown as in the country-wide demand to-day for these delightful FATIMA Cigarettes.

With each package of Fatima you get a pennant coupon, 25 of which secure a handsome felt pennant—*Colleges, Universities and Fraternal Orders (12x32)—selection of 115.*

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

"Distinctively Individual"



20 for 15¢